SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE

OF

MIRACLES

DISPLAYED:

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Barrow.

Their NATURE, Different Kinds, Possibility, Ends,

Authority, Criterion, Existence,

And Continuation,

ARE

Impartially examined and explained, according to the Light of Revelation, and the Principles of found Reason.

By G.-H.

VOLUME II.



And fold by J. P. Coghlan, Duke's Street, Grofvepor-Square, London.

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MIRACLES EXPLAINED.

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If the Existence of MIRACLES is capable of Proof, and of what kind that Proof must be.

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I. WE have seen before that miracles are possible; that they consist in certain sensible effects, which fall naturally under the cognisance of our senses; and that they are produced by the freewill and good pleasure of Almighty God, who being sovereign master of all creatures, can dispose of them in whatever way he thinks proper; either by his own immediate act, or by the operation of Angels. If therefore it ever has pleased, or shall please God to perform any miracle, one should naturally think it could not possibly admit of a doubt that its existence could be proved to as great con-Vol. II.

viction as any other sensible matter of fact whatfoever. It is therefore very amazing to fee men of real genius and excellent parts bewilder themselves in a matter which is obvious to the simplest clown, and both waste their time and abuse their talents in feeking out thin-fpun metaphyfical fophisms, by which they pretend to show that the existence of a miracle can never be capable of proof; but which, after all their pains, have no more weight in the eyes of common fense than the well known argument of Zeno against the possibility of motion. If these gentlemen act in this against their conscience, and want to impose upon their fellow-creatures, it is certainly an unpardonable infult done to mankind; but if they really think as they speak upon this subject, it is one of the most humiliating proofs of human weakness, and clearly shows into what a depth of folly the mind of man is capable of falling, when, proudly trusting to his own abilities, he plunges himself without a guide into the endless mazes of his wandering imagination. From the talk I have undertaken, I'am become debtor to the wife and to the unwife, to the learned and to the unlearned on this subject; and therefore, however unnecessary the present question may appear to common sense; yet, as infidelity has boasted wonders in its own favours, by denying the possibility of proving the existence of miracles, it is necessary to put this point also in its proper light, and to fhow

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show the weakness and insufficiency of whatever is objected against it. To do this with the greater precision and clearness, we must distinguish two questions, and examine first, if eye-witnesses of any miracle can have sufficient proof of its existence? Secondly, If the existence of miracles can be sufficiently proved to those who are not themselves eye-witnesses of it? We shall consider these separately.

II. With regard to the first question, it is refolved into this, How far can we trust our senses in matters of fact, which fall intirely under their cognisance? For if our senses, when applied to their proper objects, give us a full conviction that these objects actually do exist as our senses reprefent them; if our knowledge here is intuitive, incapable of further proof; if it be the very constitution of our nature, that we must believe we feel thefe fensations which are excited in our mind by the application of external objects to our fenses, and that these external objects which excite them do actually exist without us; then it follows of course, that those who are eye-witnesses of any miraculous operation have the fullest and most convincing proof that that miracle does actually exist, which the nature of things can possibly admit of; and that this proof must give the most intire fatisfaction; nor is it possible for any man who receives it feriously to doubt of the fact.

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Now,

Now, that this is really the case, that our senses do actually give us fuch absolute conviction in regard to the existence and effects of external material objects, a conviction which it is beyond the power of the most refined reasoning to invalidate, I appeal to experience itself; I appeal to the feelings of our own fouls; nay, I appeal to the experience of the most determined adversaries of religion. Let us fuppose then that any of those unbelievers saw a miracle performed before his own eyes, for example, a dead man raised to life; a blind man restored to his fight; a man walking over a river upon the furface of the water without finking, or the like, I alk him, would it be in his power to doubt of the reality of these facts? Could he, in his fober fenses, persuade himself that the man whom he formerly faw perfectly dead, but now fees walking, speaking, eating, &c. is still dead? That the man whom he knew before to be abfolutely blind, but whom he now fees to have as much the use of his fight as he has himself, is notwithstanding that still blind, and sees nothing at all? That the man whom he fees walking upon the furface of the water, is in reality walking on dry ground? Would it be in his power, I fay, by any effort he could possibly make to persuade his own mind, that what he faw with his eyes in these cases was absolutely false, and that the reverse of what he saw was true? I dare say some will be fo hardy as to fay fo. But let him take in the aid

aid of reason; let him summon up all the arguments he can against the existence of these miracles; let him advert that he fees no end worthy of God for performing them; that the facts are improbable, inexpedient, unnécessary; that the doctrine attefted by them feems abfurd, unintelligible, and contradictory; that the instruments are weak, vile, and unworthy the majesty of God to make use of; nay, let Mr Hume himself appear armed with his invincible argument; let him bring in his uniform universal experience; let him put this into the fcale along with all those others; and, after all, let him fay, if he can, that all thefe reasons put together would be able to raise in his mind the Imallest doubt of the real existence of the above miracles, in opposition to the testimony of his own fenses, if, as we suppose, he was an eyewitness of them: If he should say they did, common fense would laugh at his affertion, and if he was in his fober fenses, his own heart would give the lie to his words. No! no! every man's own experience and the conviction of his own mind will teach him, that the proof we receive from the testimony of our senses in those things which properly belong to them, is an invincible proof, fuperior in its kind, which needs no reason or argumentation, but convinces by inftinct, and the fixed laws of our nature, with as much affurance as we could have from the strictest demonstration: Nay. when either, from the diforder of the medium, or A 3 the

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the unfoundness of the organ, or any other usual circumstances, we suspect that any of our senses deceive us in some particular instance, we have no other way to examine and correct this deceit, but what must rest at last on this truth, that our senses, when properly applied, give absolute certainty about their proper objects; and that concerning these we must trust our senses previously to all reasoning whatsoever: See Beattie's Essay on Truth, chap. ii. § 2.

The answer to our first question then is plain and satisfactory, that those who are eye witnesses of miracles have, from the testimony of their senses, the most convincing, full and satisfactory proof that the miracles they see do really exist.

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III. Against this proof, however, of the existence of miracles from the evidence of the senses, I find two objections; the one hinted at by Rousseau, vol iii. of his Emilius, page 111. in these words: If, says he, we would receive as true all the miracles which the common and ignorant people, through every country of the world, affirm to have seen, every sect would be in the right, &c. Here he would infinuate that the only eyewitnesses produced or producible for the existence of miracles, are the common and ignorant people, and that they are easily deceived, and ready to be imposed upon in such matters. But, in the first place,

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place, it is absolutely false that the common ignorant people are the only eye-witnesses producible for the existence of such miracles as Christianity appeals to; men remarkable for their extraordinary genius and extensive learning, as well as for their veracity and candour, have given the most affured testimony of miracles, of which they themfelves were the eye-witnesses: But, letting this pass, which is not so much to our present purpose, what Rousseau alledges, that the common ignorant people are eafily deceived and ready to be imposed upon, cannot in the least degree weaken the evidence for the existence of miracles taken from the external fenfes; even though the common people were the only witnesses of them; miracles are facts which fall under the comprehension of the most simple minds; the ignorant people have eyes and ears as well as the learned; they can know if a man be cripple, blind, fick or dead, as well as the greatest physician or philosopher; and if they see this man restored again to his legs, sight, health or life, they can difcern that change with as great certainty as a Rousseau or a Hume could do themfelves, and can have as full and intire a conviction of it. I acknowledge, indeed, the ignorant multitude may be deceived; but how? a defigning perfon may gain credit with the many by an outward show of fanctity, and pretend secret communications with the Deity and his angels, as Mahomet did; or he may perform many extraordinary things

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in the eyes of the people, by his fuperior knowledge in the powers of nature, and perfuade them that these are true miradles; or he may bewitch them with forceries, as Simon did the people of Samaria; but to make even the ignorant people believe they actually faw a fact performed before their eyes, which never was done, is what fcarce was ever attempted, and doubtless, though attempted, could never fucceed. Tho' men, fays Mr Douglas in his Criterion, page 312. may believe speculative opinions to be true which are false, yet it is scarcely to be conceived, that they can ever so far deceive themselves, as to believe they faw facts which they did not really fee. And this observation is true of all mankind, the ignorant and fimple as well as the learned and prudent,

IV. The fecond objection against the proof of the existence of miracles, drawn from the senses in those who are eye-witnesses of them, is made by Mr Hume, and seems so strong in his eyes, that he thinks all the miracles alledged by Christianity can easily be accounted for by that means: "A religionist, says he, may be an enthusiast, and imagine he sees what has no reality," Ess. on Mir. page 185. Here enthusiasm is brought in as able to invert men's senses, and to overturn the most constitutional principles of the human frame: No question enthusiasm can go a great length in persuading men to believe for true what

what is false, and to esteem the whims of their own fancy, or even the fuggestions of the devil, as the inspirations of the Holy Ghost; but I doubt if one fingle instance can be brought, where it perfuaded any one in his wits, that he faw done before him what had no manner of existence; and, even though this should happen to the enthusiast himself, who pretends to perform the miracle, or on whom it was performed, are all those enthufiasts too who behold fuch pretended miracles? And yet numbers of miracles are upon record which were done in the presence of declared enemies, and who could by no means be suspected of enthusiasm. Doctor Campbell, in his dissertation on miracles against Mr Hume, answers this objection very folidly from this principle of experience as follows.

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V. "That an enthusiast is very liable to be imposed on, in whatever favours the particular species of enthusiasm with which he is affected, none who knows any thing of the human heart will deny. But still this frailty hath its limits. For my own part, I cannot find examples of any, even among enthusiasts (unless to the conviction of every body they were distracted) who did not see and hear in the same manner as other people. Many of this tribe have mistaken the reveries of a heated imagination for the communications of the divine spirit, who never

in one fingle instance mistook the operations of their external fenfes. Without marking this difference, we should make no distinction between the enthufallic character and the frantic. which are in themselves evidently diffinct." Part ii. 6 1. In another place, after observing that the whole class of reformers, however useful miracles might have been to their views, yet never attempted to prove their million or doctrine by these means. He then adds : " But how "upon our author's (Mr Hume's) principles shall we account for this moderation in the reformers? Were they, in his judgment, calm inouirers after truth? Were they dispassionate reasoners in defence of it? Far otherwise. He tells us (Hift. Gr. Brit. Ja. I. chap. 1.), They may fafely be pronounced to have been univerfally inflamed with the highest enthusiasm. May not we then, in our turn, fafely pronounce, this writer himfel? being judge, that for a man to imagine he fees what has no reality, to imrose in this manner, not only on his own understanding, but even on his external fenses, is a pitch of delution higher than the highest enthuflafin can produce, and is to be imputed only to downright phrenzy? Since the world began, there hath not appeared a more general propenfion to the wildest fanaticism—than appeared in this island about the middle of the last century. Tis aftonishing, that when the minds of men were of

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were intoxicated with enthuliasim-none are to be found who advanced a claim to the power of working miracles, a claim which in the author's opinion (Mr Hume's), though false, is easily supported and wonderfully fuccessful, especially among enthuliafts. It is true, one or two frantic people among the Quakers did actually pretend to fuch a power; but it had no other confequences than to bring upon the pretenders a general; contempt. In the beginning of this century also, the French prophets revived this pleabut by no part of their conduct did they fo effectually open the eyes of mankind, discredit their own inspirations, and ruin their cause, as by this no less foolish than presumptuous pretence—and (which is particularly to be observed for our purpose) though they were mad enough to imagine that they could restore a dead man to life; nay, though they proceeded fo far as to determine and announce before-hand the day and hour of his refurrection; yet none of them were fo diffracted as to imagine they had feen him rife; not one of them afterwards pretended that their prediction had been fulfilled. even a phrenzy which had quite difordered their intellects, could not in this instance overpower their fenies." Part. ii. § 2. 11 bag ang hangel.

From these judicious remarks it plainly follows, that the evidence from the senses, with regard to the the objects belonging to them, is not to be overpowered even by the rage of enthulialm itself; and therefore, that those who are eye-witnesses of any miracle have, from the testimony of their senses, the most absolute and convincing proof of its existence.

VI. This first question being thus folidly fettled, the answer to the second naturally flows from it as a just confequence; for if those who are eye-witnesses of a miracle, can, from the evidence of their fenses, have a full and absolute conviction of the reality of its existence, they doubtless can give testimony of this evidence and conviction to others who were not prefent when the miracle was performed; and by this means givet hofe alfo, who did not see it, as intire a conviction of the reality of its existence as the nature of the case can possibly bear. The existence of a miracle is the existence of a matter of fact, which folely depends upon the good pleasure and free choice of God; and the proof of its existence must be taken either from the evidence of our own fenses, if we fee it ourselves, or from the testimony of others who have been eye-witnesses of it; for there is no other way by which the existence of such facts as depend upon, and flow from the will and choice of free agents, can possibly be proved, but by one or other of these two; nor can any rational objection be made against their existence, when properly **fupported**

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supported by either of these proofs, but only such as strikes directly upon these proofs themselves, by supposing some flaw or defect in them; if therefore they possess all those conditions, which, by the very constitution of our nature, command our affent, an objection, drawn folely from arguments extrinsical to these proofs, can, in just reasoning, have no manner of force against the existence of the fact so proved by theni. Now, as we have feen above that all the usual arguments brought against the existence of miracles, vanish like smoke before the wind, when opposed to the evidence of the fenses in eye-witnesses, it follows of course, that if such eye-witnesses are people of veracity and probity, or have those other qualities in the testimony they give, which exclude all sufpicion of deceit, their testimony of what they declare they faw with their own eyes, must give the most satisfactory conviction that what they asfert is true, in fpite of all metaphyfical fophifms to the contrary.

We can come to the knowledge of facts past or absent, only by the testimony of others; it is impossible for us to acquire that knowledge any other way; but then the conviction and certainty we receive from testimony with regard to the truth of such facts, are in many cases as full and absolute as what we receive from any other source of knowledge in these matters which belong to it: Nay, when the Vol. II.

B testimony

testimony has its necessary conditions attending it, it never fails to give us the utmost conviction. These conditions are two, first, when we are certain the witnesses were not deceived themselves: fecondly, when we are certain they fpeak exactly according to their own knowledge. When thefe two conditions concur, or when we believe they are present, it is impossible for us not to give credit to testimony given in this manner. We may doubt if the witnesses were deceived themselves: we may call in question their veracity with regard to us: but if we have no doubts upon these points, it is no longer in our power to doubt of the truth of what they fay; we are determined to believe it, and to believe it with the utmost affurance, by the very disposition of our nature itfelf: and hence Dr Beattie, after some very judicious observations on this subject, justly concludes, that To believe testimony is agreeable to nature, to reason, and to sound philosophy. Essay on Truth, chap. ii. 6 8.

VII. Now there are rules to know when the testimony is attended with the two conditions above-mentioned, sounded on principles which are born with us, and which are the soundation of human society, and of the whole intercourse there is between man and man, namely, That men are not sools and senseless: That there are certain rules from which they seldom or ever depart

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part in their conduct: That there cannot the a HOUSE joint combination among them to deceive : That if they deceive fometimes, it is not without fome molive HEL particularly interest: That the whole world never conspires to deceive any man: That no man can deceive the whole world: These principles are ascertained by the confentient reason of mankind, whose general practice is directed by them in the most important concerns of life; in proving genealogy, in fettling property, in administring justice, and the like: and from them this general maxim is deduced relative to our faith in testimony, That we must believe the testimony of men, when the facts testified by them being possible, we cannot believe they are deceived, or intend to deceive, without supposing that they are out of their wits.

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VIII. "Our faith in testimony, says Mr
Beattie, doth often, but not always amount to
absolute certainty. That there is such a city
as Constantinople, such a country as Lapland,
and such a mountain as the peak of Teneriss;
that there were such men as Hannibal and Julius Cæsar; that England was conquered by
William the Norman, and that Charles I. was
beheaded; of these and such like truths, every
person acquainted with history and geography
accounts himself absolutely certain. When a
number of persons, not acting in concert, having no interest to disguise the truth, and sufficient
B 2

' judges of that to which they bear testimony, f concur in making the fame report, it would be accounted madness not to believe them, Nay, when a number of witnesses, separately examined, and having had no opportunity to conf cert a plan before-hand, do all agree in their declarations, we make no fcruple of yielding full faith to their testimony, even though we have no evidence of their honesty and skill; nay, though they be notorious both for knavery and folly: Because, the fictions of the human mind being infinite, it is impossible that each of these witnesses should, by mere accident, devise the ' very same circumstances: If therefore their def clerations concur, this is a certain proof that ' there is no fiction in the case, and that they all ' fpeak from real experience and knowledge." Essay on Truth, Part. I. chap. ii. § 8.

IX. To the same purpose Mr Douglas speaks in his Criterion, or Miracles examined, on the force of proper testimony: "Two qualifications, says he, must concur to establish the credibility of witnesses; a sufficient knowledge of the matters of fact they attest, and a disposition not to falsify what they know: And when these two qualifications do concur, we think ourselves obtiged to admit what is attested as true." P. 199. Dr Church also, in his Vindication, page 62. "It must be granted, says he, that present facts, which

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which are appeals to the fenfes, are more firiking and fatisfactory than any long intricate reafonings: And hence miracles may be proonounced to be the shortest and clearest means of conviction of the divine authority of any mission, and consequently of any doctrine to those who see them. And further, as we may have fufficient certainty of their having been worked in times past, they must, if well attested, be full proofs, even to us who do not fee them." But it is needless to multiply testimonies for this point, as every one's own experience must teach him, that when we are perfuaded a perfon is not deceived himself in what he attests, and that he truly speaks according to his own experience of the matter, it is no longer in our power to withhold our affent from what he fays concerning it. Confequently, if any miracle be attested by those who were eye-witnesses of it, and in such circumflances as we cannot suspect their veracity, we have from their testimony a full and convincing proof of the existence of the miracle; a proof which, as Dr Beattie observes, it would be accounted madnefs not to yield to; and which, according to Mr Douglas, would oblige us to receive what was so attested as true. hamowicomit notus

X. We may consider this subject in another point of view, which will serve still further to illustrate it. It is, doubtless, a just and convincing inference, which is made from the effect to the

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cause :

cause; we see an effect produced; we know the cause which naturally and constantly produces fuch an effect; we argue, therefore, with the greatest certainty, from the known existence of the effect, that the cause producing it existed also. The testimony of men concerning any matter of fact, is an effect produced, of which we are fenfible; we know this effect may arise from two different causes, and from no other; it may either. arise from the real existence of the fact itself, of which those men were eye-witnesses; or it may arise from their mistake or impossure, as being either deceived themselves or wanting to deceive others. If we have any reason to suspect that the witnesses were either mistaken themselves, or intend to deceive others by the testimony they give, then their testimony goes for nothing; it gains no credit; because it is not looked upon as an effect of the real existence of the fact attested by it. But if, on the contrary, the circumstances be such, that we fee it impossible the testimony could arise from mistake or imposture, then it could have no other cause but the real existence of the attested fact, the existence of which we are therefore no longer at liberty to deny.

XI. It is upon these grounds that the adverfaries of Christianity pay every due regard to human testimony, in all the ordinary concerns of life, and make no difficulty in regulating by it their belief and conduct with regard to all natural occurences. 8

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occurences. But, being fentible of what infuperable strength testimony has in favours of religion, and against their tenets, if allowed its due weight with regard to miracles, they have been forced as their last resource, to make a distinction between natural and supernatural events; and, whilft they allow testimony its full authority in proving the former, pretend that no credit can be given to it when applied to the latter. A miraracle, fays Mr Hume, fupported by any human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than of argument, Est, on Mir. page 194. And again, about the conclusion of his esfay, he fays, Upon the whole, it appears that no testimony for any kind of miracle can ever possibly amount to a probability, much less to a proof. A little after, indeed, he corrects his too general affertion, and restrains the impossibility of proving the existence of miracles by testimony to such only as are wrought in favours of religion. We may establish it as a maxim, fays he, that no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any system of religion. And, in a note upon this passage, he adds, I beg the limitation here made may be remarked, when I fay that a miracle can never be proved fo as to be the foundation of a system of religion; for I own, that otherwise there may be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony. I am, indeed, somewhat at a loss to comprehend what Mr

Mr Hume would be at in these passages, and am apt to think he is here fallen into one of those felf-contradictions, which are fo frequently to be met with in deiftical philosophy; for, first, he tells us, as above, in general, that a miracle supported by any human testimony is more properly a subject of derision than of argument; if so, how is it posfible for any miracle to be of such a kind as to admit of proof from testimony? Must we suppose he means that only fuch miracles as are in favours of religion, when supported by human testimony, are subjects of derision? But how then will he reconcile this obvious difficulty, that human testimony is sufficient to prove the existence of a miracle, when disjoined from religion, but becomes a fubject of derision when used to prove the existence of the same miracle, if performed in favours of religion? Secondly, the whole force of Mr Hume's argument throughout this effay, is intended to prove that the existence of a miracle as fuch, and independent of any connection with religion, can never be proved by human testimony. A miracle, fays he, is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the fact, is as intire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined: and if so, it is an undeniable consequence that it cannot be furmounted by any proof whatever from testimony. A miracle, therefore, however attested, can never be rendered credible,

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even in the lowest degree. Est. on Mir. page 170. and 180. Lond. edit. 1750, 12mo. Here we fee, according to this author, that the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, as being a violation of the laws of nature, can never be surmounted by any proof from testimony: How then can he reconcile to this undeniable confequence of his formidable argument, what he fays in the note above-cited, that there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony? Let him extricate himself here the best way he can; but this conduct shows his insuperable aversion against religious miracles proveable by human testimony, since he is determined to run the rifk of having his darling judgment suspected, yea, and his common sense itself called in question, rather than admit them.

XII. Dr Middleton, in like manner, with all his adherents, is so averse to the force of human testimony in proof of miracles, that he fairly renounces all credibility of miracles founded upon such evidence, and openly professes he knows no miracles, no revealed truths, nought which the wit of man can possibly discover of the ways or will of the Creator, but by attending to the revelation which he has made of himself from the beginning, in the wonderful works and beautiful fabric of this visible world. Pref. to the Free Inquiry, page

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page 22. We shall see more of the Doctor afterwards.

tion, according to stop, assign, that the lifeting XIII. We are surprised when we hear men of parts and learning talk in fuch a strain, which, if they really think as they write, is a palpable proof of their most extravagant vanity and presumption, whereby, with the utmost assurance, they fet up the proud idol of their judgment, forfooth, in oppolition to the dictates of nature and common fense, manifested by the concurrent fentiments of all the rest of mankind; yea, in opposition to the declaration of God himself; whilst at the same time they cannot produce one fensible proof for their opinion, but either talk downright nonfense, and contradict themselves in what they say upon the fubject, as we have feen above in Mr Hume, or are obliged to pass the most extravagant censure upon the rest of mankind, and condemn the most pious, virtuous, wifest and learnedest of men in every age of Christianity, as a parcel of arrant knaves or downright idiots, which Dr Middleton never flicks to do in support of his unsustainable system. Nothing, therefore, will ferve more to show the folly of pretending that the existence of miracles or supernatural facts is not capable of being proved by human testimony, than to show how diametrically contrary it is to the common fentiments of all mankind, but they better which were to write

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XIV. To begin with the people of God in the old law; how many most extraordinary miracles, which had happened in every age from the beginning of the world, were harded down from generation to generation among them by human testimony; and were, upon this evidence alone, believed with the utmost certainty? They therefore judged this testimony a full and sufficient proof of the existence of these miracles, and it produced conviction in their minds accordingly. It will perhaps be alledged here, that these miracles were related in the facred scriptures, and from them received the fanction of a divine testimony: But it is to be observed, that few of the people could themselves make use of these scriptures; copies of them were far from being common among their hands; nay, we read in the reign of Josias, that Hilkiah, the high-prieft, accidentally found a copy of the law, and fent it to the king; and that he and all the people were amazed when they heard it read before them, which shows how fcarce the copies of that facred book must have been among them, 2 Kings xxii. But, besides the divinity of this book itself, and consequently the truth of all those wonderful things it contains, whence did that people receive it? Almighty God did not to every generation give a new revelation of it: this was done at first by means of the facred penmen who wrote it, attefting they did fo by inspiration from God, and giving

giving proof of this by the miracles they wrought for that end: This was a convincing proof that these books were divine to those who thus first received them; but it was their testimony to their children, and the testimony of their children to those after them, which was the great channel by which both the divinity of the books themselves, and the miracles they contained, were handed down, and upon which they were believed by all succeeding generations.

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XV. The case is exactly the same with regard to the whole body of Christians under the new law: These in every age, to this day, have believed with the utmost certainty numbers of miracles, when they faw them fufficiently attefted by human testimony. Every heathen nation, upon its being converted to Christianity, gives proof of the same thing; they, upon their conversion, believed as undoubted truths all the miracles related in the gospel; if they did so upon the testimony of those who converted them alone, without their working new miracles in proof of what they preached, then we have what we want; to prove that these converted nations efteemed testimony a sufficient ground on which to believe miracles: If these preachers wrought miracles themselves to prove the divinity of their mission, and the truth of what they taught, yet these could not possibly be done before ht

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fore the whole people, and those who did not fee them could believe them only upon the testimony of those who were present; yet these whole nations were converted, and actually believed these miracles upon that testimony, which therefore they judged a fufficient ground for doing fo. Nay, the obstinate heathens themselves, who fet themselves up to oppose the Christian religion, who used every effort of their genius and learning to find if possible a flaw in it, never had the effrontery to deny its miracles: they acknowledged them, convinced by the strength of testimony, and only sought to evade the consequence drawn from them, by ascribing them to the devil and not to God; but this very evalion shows how much they were convinced that testimony gives an undeniable conviction in proof of the existence of miracles.

XVI. But the greatest condemnation of this opinion of our modern wits, is the express declaration of Almighty God himself, who judges human testimony so thorough and satisfactory a proof to convince his reasonable creatures of the existence of miracles, that he appoints this and this alone as the proper means to propagate the knowledge of those glorious miracles he wrought among his chosen people, throughout all succeeding generations. Thus, when giving commission to Moses to threaten Pharaoh with the plague Vol. II.

of locusts, he tells him that he had wrought so many figns and wonders in favours of his people for this very end, that they and their posterity might know he was the only true God, and that fucceeding generations must be informed of these things by the testimony of those before them. That thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy fon's fon, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my figns which I have done among them, that ye may know that I am the Lord, Exod. x. 2. Again, among the many other excellent rules that Moses gave the people before his death, he fays on this subject : Only take heed to thy felf, and keep thy foul diligently, left thou forget the things which thine eyes have feen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy fons and thy fon's fons, Deut. Hence, we find the royal prophet expressly aknowledges, that it was by the testimony of their fathers that they knew all the wonderful things God had done among them: We have heard with our ears. O God, and our fathers have told us, what works thou didft in their days, and in the times of old, Pfal. xliv. 1. Where we fee the testimony of their fathers not only taught them what was done in their own time, of which they were eye-witnesses, but also what had been done before their days in the times of old, which they had in like manner received from those before them: Again, Pfal. lxxviii. he declares his readiness to communicate

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nicate the knowledge of the law of God, and of all his wondrous works to his posterity, in obedience to the command God had given for that purpose: Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth; I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark fayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us: We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done: See here the refolution the holy prophet makes to transmit to posterity the law and wondrous works of God, by teaching them to the rifing generation; he immediately adds his reason for so doing, For be established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Ifrael, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, Pfal lxxviii. r. &c. In this beautiful passage, we are assured that the testimony of each present generation to their children, was the very means appointed by God for afcertaining to all succeeding ages, not only the law itself, but also the testimony by which it was established at the beginning, those wonderful works that the Lord had done in confirmation of the divine revelation of the law, when he first gave it to their fathers, and that

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that God himself expressly commands this should be the means of conveying these things to posterity. What idea must every serious Christian have after this of the pitiful evasion of a Middleton or a Hume, pretending that the existence of a miracle cannot admit of a sufficient proof from human testimony, when we see that God himself appointed this to be the only means of proving to all posterity the existence of those miracles he wrought among his people?

XVII. To this fubject also belong those other branches of human testimony, the institution of feafts; the facred ceremonies of religion; the erecting of public monuments, and the like, as memorials of miracles wrought on different occafions, which Almighty God was also pleased to make use of, and commanded his people to preferve the memory of what these things signified, by explaining them to their children after them : See Exod. xiii. 8. 14. for the institution of the feast of unleavened bread, and the fanctification of the first-born: also Deut. vi. 20. &c. for the meaning of the ceremonies of the law: Joshua iv. on their passing over Jordan: Numb. xvi. 38. &c. for the establishing the priesthood, and many other fuch: All which shew again that human testimony and its attendants were judged by the great God himself thoroughly sufficient to prove the reality of all those wondrous works he had wrought

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wrought in favours of his people, and to perpetuate the memory of them for ever; and the event proves the efficacy and fitness of human testimony for this end, since it is by it that the memory of these things has been in sact transmitted down from these early ages in which they were performed, even to these our days; and we may safely venture to say, will, by the same means, be continued to the end of time.

XVIII. But all this will appear still further from the command Almighty God gave his people to beware of false prophets, even though working figns and wonders in favour of their doctrine, as is related, Deut. xiii For on what grounds did God lay this order upon them? We have feen this above, namely, that the stupenduous miracles he had wrought in favours of his truth, when he first revealed it to them, ought so fully to convince them that he was the author of it, that whatever doctrine should afterwards be proposed contrary thereto, should, for that very reason, as being contrary to the known truth, be condemned and rejected; and that, though its teachers should work figns in its favours, yet the fame reason fhould convince them that these signs were not from God, but from the devil, and therefore to be rejected along with the false doctrine in favours of which they were performed; for, according to the rules laid down in the end of the preceding chap-

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ter, when the doctrine is evidently false (and none fure can be more fo than what is contrary to the truths revealed by God), and the miracles dubious which are wrought in favours of it, the known falfehood of the doctrine is the infallible touchstone to discover the imposture of the pretended miracle. Now, this obligation of rejecting false teachers, even though working figns in their own favours, was not for these only who had seen the miracles wrought by God at the first revelation of his law, but for all their posterity in after-times, to whom the knowledge of these primitive miracles was to be transmitted by God's appointment, by means of human testimony: Hence, then, it is evident, that Almighty God judged human teftimony, not only fufficient to convince after-ages of the reality of these miracles, but even to give the people fuch a conviction of them, and of the truth of the doctrine attested by them, as to bear them up against the delusion of any false signs or pretended miracles, which might in after-times be brought by Satan's means, in order to propagate any false doctrine contrary to the truths they had been taught.

XIX. The fame conduct we find observed in the new law. The doctrine revealed by Jesus Christ, and preached by his apostles, was supported and confirmed, and proved to be divine by the miracles they wrought in attestation of it. These give

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give fuch a conviction of the truth of that doctrine, that whatever doctrine is contrary thereto. we are commanded to reject and condemn as falfe, precifely because contrary to the gospel; and St Paul pronounces a curse upon any one, though an angel from heaven, who should ever dare to preach any other gospel than what he had preached. Now this obligation will continue upon all Christians to the end of time, to reject every doctrine as false and erroneous which is contrary to the truth revealed by Jesus; but the miracles by which the doctrine of Jefus was proved to be divine, is conveyed to all after-ages primarily by human testimony; for that is the first step by which we come to the knowledge of the scriptures them. felves, in which these miracles are recorded: Therefore, here again human testimony is judo. ed fufficient by Almighty God to convey to us the knowledge of these miracles, and of the doctrines attested by them, with such conviction as to make us proof against the attempts even of an angel from heaven, should he endeavour to delude us by any false doctrine contrary to the gospel.

XX. And indeed, if we suppose (which is certainly not an impossible supposition) that Almighty God should be pleased to reveal his will to man, and work miracles to attest that the revelation was from him, and should want that the knowledge of this revelation, and of the miracles attesting it, should be transmitted

mitted to future ages; how is it possible this should be done but by human testimony alone? Can a Middle-tom or Hume assign any other way of doing it? will they pretend a succession of miracles must be continually kept up in every generation, and in presence of every individual, in order to prove the original revelation? How ridiculous such a pretence? will they blasphemously say that the omnipotent being has it not in his power to transmit with certainty the knowledge of these things to suture ages? how ridiculous, then, is it for them to pretend that miracles cannot be proved by human testimony, since human testimony is absolutely the only natural means by which such facts can be proved to those who are not themselves eye-witnesses of them.

XXI. The refult of all this is, that the only rational objection that can be made against the existence of any miracle must be such as strikes at the testimony by which it is supported; but if this stand the test, whatever metaphysical argument a priori, and extrinsical to the testimony, may be brought against it, can never, in the eye of common sense, have the least weight to influence the mind, or weaken that conviction of the existence of miracles which the force of testimony gives her: And yet upon examination we find, that all the arguments brought by the above gentlemen and their party, against the existence of miracles, are only of this kind, gilded over with a turn of wit or ridicule, to make them

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XXII. I shall say nothing here of Mr Hume's boasted argument against proving the existence of miracles by human testimony, the sutility of which has been already demonstrated to excellent purpose by several masterly hands; I shall only observe with Dr Campbell, that one positive credible testimony for the existence of a fact possible in itself, is of more weight to convince a man of common sense of the existence of such a fact, than ten hundred thousand millions of negative experiences against it; and this single observation, which is founded upon positive experience, and the seelings of our own heart, saps at once the soundation of all that Mr Hume has advanced upon this subject.

XXIII. The other arguments brought by the adversaries of revelation against our thesis may be reduced to these following: Miracles are unnecessary; they are inexpedient; they are incredible; they are trissing, and unworthy of the Deity; there are no ends to be gained by them worthy of such extraordinary divine interposition; the doctrine pretended to be attested by them is absurd, and such as these; from which they conclude that no human testimony can render them credible in such circumstances. I don't know if these gentlemen have

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ever given themselves the trouble to examine serioully the force of the fereafons in which they fo much triumph, or to apply them to any particular cafe, or even to put them in a proper form, that they might fee wherein their strength or weakness lay. I can scarce think, if ever they had done so, that they would have exposed their own judgement to the contempt which fuch reasoning must necessarily bring upon it; nor do I find, in their writings or conversation, any thing like a ferious ratiocination upon the matter, but a laugh and a fneer, with the words incredible, unnecessary, inexpedient, no ends, and the like, interspersed in order to give a colour of reason to their declamation. But let us here examine the matter, and reduce their argument to a proper point of view, that common fense may judge of its force and importance. Let us suppose then a miracle, for example, a blind man restored to the use of his eyes, to be attested upon oath by three or four men of known probity, who declare they were eye-witnesses of it. man of ordinary judgment would be fatisfied, by fuch testimony, that the fact was actually done; it could not be imagined the witnesses were mistaken, as it is supposed they knew the man to be blind before, and faw him perfectly restored to his fight; much lefs could it be thought that men of known probity would atteft a thing upon oath as eye-witneffes of it, if they had not had as great conviction

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tion of its existence as the testimony of their own fenses could possibly give them: And if they be not mistaken in what they saw, and do attest it precifely as they beheld it, the existence of the miracle is an undoubted confequence. Let us fee now the force of the above reasons against it, when put in their proper form from the mouth of a Deift: it runs thus: "Several men of probity have " attested upon oath, that they saw a man whom "they knew before to be blind miraculously re-" flored to his fight; but this appears to me inex-" pedient, unnecessary, without any good end, in-"trinfically incredible; therefore it is all a mif-" take; no fuch miracle was performed." major proposition is the state of the case as attested, the minor is the very argument of the Deifts; for fure none of them will dare affirm that miracles are inexpedient, unnecessary, or the like, in themfelves: the most they can say is, that they appear fo to them; and from this appearance they conclude as an answerable argument, that the best attested miracles are all falsehood and fiction! How ridiculous do they show themselves by such a conclusion? In order that a miracle well attested be falsehood or fiction, one of two things must be clearly proved, either that the witnesses were deceived in the testimony their senses gave them of the fact, or that they knowingly perjured themselves to deceive others: Now what connection is there between

of the miracle in the eyes of a Deift, and either of these two points? Because the miracle appears unnecessary or inexpedient to a Deist, does it therefore follow that the witnesses were deceived in what they saw with their eyes, or that they voluntarily perjured themselves by swearing contrary to their conscience? How unworthy of a philosopher to argue in such a strain?

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XXIV. Their arguments from the pretended unworthiness of the ends of miracles, and from the pretended abfurdity of the doctrine attested by them, I have confidered more particularly above, when treating on the ends of miracles, and on the criterion; and have pointed out the grounds whence all their fophistry on these heads arise. I shall not, therefore, repeat now what I faid above, but conclude this subject by a few observations on what they say from the incredibility of the miraculous facts attested. One should scarce think they could be ferious when they make an objection against the existence of miracles on this account; or at least it were to be wished they would explain what they mean by the intrinsical incredibility of a miracle. If they mean that every miraculous fact involves an absolute contradiction, or, in other words, that a miracle is in itself absolutely impossible, let them rest upon that in plain terms, and prove it if they can;

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can; but if they allow that miracles are possible (and we have clearly shown above, when treating on that point, that they are fo), how ridiculous is it to object that any possible fact is intrinsically incredible, when omnipotence itself is supposed to be agent? Is any thing possible too hard for God to perform? is any possible change in his creatures above his strength? Even Dr Middleton, with reason, laughs at such an objection: To say that where the facts themselves are incredible, says he, such miracles are to be rejected, is to beg the question, and not to prove it; a too precarious way of reasoning-because what is incredible to me may seem credible to another. Remarks on the observator, p. 26. et seqq. And Mr Locke, whose justness of thought and strength of genius will not readily be called in question, is so far from looking upon the extraordinary strangeness of the fact to be an argument against its existence, that in certain circumstances he draws the quite contrary conclusion: Though the common experience, fays he, and the ordinary counse of things have justly a mighty influence on the minds of men, to make them give or refuse credit to any thing proposed to their belief, yet there is one case wherein the strangeness of the fact lessens not the assent to a fair testimony given of it. For where such supernatural events are suitable to ends aimed at by him who has the power to change the course of nature, there, under fuch circumstances, they may be the fitter to procure VOL. II. belief.

belief, by how much the more they are beyond or contrary to ordinary observation. Es on the Hum. Und. iv. 16. § 13. This is a most just remark, with which we shall here conclude this subject, because afterwards, when treating on the continuation of miracles in the church of Christ, this objection from the incredibility of the facts must be resumed, and more fully consuted.

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CHAP. XII.

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On the Continuation of MIRACLES in the Church of Christ; the State of the QUESTION, and the conduct of Dr Middleton and his Protestant Adversaries examined.

I. The are now arrived at the last subject to be discussed concerning miracles, but a subject big with the most important confequences, according to whatever way it shall be determined. Men of the greatest abilities and learning in this island, have of late years been deeply engaged in examining this subject, and have published to the world many learned and elaborate treatifes in defence of their feveral fystems. Some with Dr Middleton have contended that all miracles cenfed with the lives of the apostles; some have afferted that they continued frequently in the church during the first three centuries, and till the Chris. tian religion was established in the Roman empire by law; others have extended their duration to the end of the fourth century, others to the end of the fifth; and fome have endeavoured to show their continuation even during the fixth century; D2 but but all agree in afferting their total ceffation at those their respective periods which the authors of each fystem are pleased to assign. The Catholic church reposing, with an entire confidence, on the facred promifes of her divine spouse, and convinced by daily experience that these promises will stand firm to the end of time, laughs at all these jarring opinions of her adverfaries, and upholds, in opposition to their self-contradicting systems, that the power of working miracles never has, and never will be withdrawn from her communion: that in all preceeding ages Almighty God has from time to time raifed up many great and holy men among her children, by whom he has wrought numberless miraculous signs and wonders, and that he will never fail to do the fame in all fucceeding ages to the end of the world, in defence of his truth, as taught by her, to the utter confusion of all those who separate themselves from her communion. This constant doctrine of the Catholic church, if true, shows the folly of her adversaries in the difputes and contentions they have among themselves: their systems are all founded upon a falsehood; they run in quest of a phantom which has no existence, and take for granted, as the basis of their disputes, the very thing which is denied them: For if what the Catholic church teaches be true, that the power of working miracles has never ceased in her communion, how ridiculous must it appear in her adversaries to pretend at

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to fix a period at which miracles have actually ceased! their jarring opinions upon this point ferve only to illustrate her claim; and the arguments by which they prove the continuation of miracles down to their respective assumed periods of cellation, afford her the most convincing proofs to flow that they have never ceased at all. It is not my intention to examine the merits of thefe leveral fystems among themselves; they all fall under the fame predicament with regard to the main point: I acknowledge the abilities of their respective authors and abettors, in proving beyond reply the continuation of miracles during the feveral periods affigned by them, but must disagree with them all in the supposition on which they all proceed, to wit, that miracles have actually ceafed after any one of these periods; and what I propose to prove is the truth of what the Catholic church teaches, that miracles never have, and never will ceafe in her communion while the world remains. But before I enter upon the proof of this important matter, it will be necessary to explain the state of the question, to consider the nature of the miraculous powers and their different kinds, and to examine what the scripture teaches us concerning them.

II. The extreme opposition which the Christian religion must naturally have met with at its first promulgation in the world, from the incom-

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prehenfibility of its fublime mysteries, which demand the most intire humiliation of our proud judgments; from the purity and severity of its morality, which requires a perfect mortification of felflove, and of all the lusts of our hearts; from the contemptible state of its first preachers, men of no character or station in life, and destitute of all human means to affift them in their vast undertaking, and of every earthly qualification which could recommend them to the regard or esteem of the world; from the deep attachment which mankind naturally have to the religion they have been accustomed to, especially when it flatters their inclinations, and lays no restraint on their passions, as was the case with Heathenism when Christianity first began; from the pride and obstinacy of philosophers, whose darling tenets were all to be annulled by the pure doctrines of the gospel; from the inveterate malice of the heathen priests, and of all those whose interest was concerned in support of Heathenism, which it was the direct and declared intention of Christianity to overthrow; and above all from the rage and malice of hell, whose power was restrained, and whose kingdom was destroyed in proportion as the truths of the gospel gained ground, and which, on that account, used every possible means to crush it in its very infancy, and destroy it in the bud, by stirring up the whole power of kingdoms and empires against it; the extreme opposition, I fay, which Christianity must naturally have met with, william wiston .

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with, on its first appearance, from these and other fuch causes, made it absolutely necessary that Almighty God, its divine Author, should stretch out his omnipotent hand in its defence, and, by miracles fuited to the difficulties it had to encounter. enable it to conquer all these difficulties, and convince mankind to their intire satisfaction that that religion was from him: For, confidering all the above circumstances, it was impossible it could ever have been adopted by mankind if they had not been entirely convinced that God was the Author of it. And St. Augustine justly observes, had this conviction been given them without the interpolition of miracles, itself would have been the greatest miracle of all: But Almighty God, qui disponit omnia suaviter et fortiter, who disposes all things with frength and fweetness; who never fails to bring to pass by his Almighty power whatever he is determined to accomplish, and who always brings about his designs with the greatest sweetness, by means the most connatural to the subject he has to work upon, and the most adapted to the end proposed, effectually did establish the Christian religion in the world in spite of all opposition, and gave mankind the most irrefragable proofs of its divine original, by that profusion of supernatural gifts and graces which he bestowed upon those who professed it. Nothing could be more adapted to gain the end proposed than this was; for, by means of these supernatural graces, the Christians themselves

themselves had an internal experimental feeling of the truth of their religion; they felt the wonderfull effects it wrought in their own hearts, the divine hight which beamed forth in their underflandings, the inche change of their affections, which became detached from all the perishable objects of this life, and fixed on God and those eternalgoods which their holy religion proposed to them; the interior confolations and delightful joys which the Holy Choit communicated to their fouls; the fortitude and firength he gave them to overcome all difficulties; may, which made them even love those very torments, when suffered for his fake, which human nature most abhors. These were proofs indeed ! internal feelings, experimental proofs, which gave the most intire conviction to those happy fouls who felt them, and made them at the lame time the most proper instruments of convincing others, that the religion they professed was truly divine : in fact, their heroic fortitude under the feverest trials; their amazing patience in the midft of torments; their profound humility; their admirable meekness and charity towards their most inveterate enemies, joined to the flupenduous miracles wrought by their means, gave fuch a force and efficacy to their words, as could not fail to make the deepest impression on the minds of the heathens, gradually undermined their prejudices and obstinacy, and at last converted them intirely to the faith and law of Christ.

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III. The nature and different kinds of these spiritual gifts and graces are described to us by St. Paul as follows: To one indeed by the spirit is given the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same spirit; to another faith by the same spirit; to another the grace of healing by the same spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophefy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another diver se kinds of tongues; to anoother the interpretation of speeches: But all these things one and the same spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he wills, I Cor. xii. The following explanation of them is laid down by the learned author of the miraculous powers of the church, page 3. as taken from the best commentators on this subject.

IV. "By the word of wisdom is generally understood the gift of prudence or discretion, in the use of all other spiritual gifts, so that they be not exerted out of due time and place, &c.; a point wherein some of the faithful were desicient, as appears from the xiv. chapter of the same Epistle. By the word of knowledge, is meant a facility of expounding the doctrine of faith, so as to lay it open to the hearers in such a method as may be most suitable to their capacity. By faith, in this passage, is meant not that theological virtue by which we yield assent to every revealed truth on the testimony of God, but

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· but a certain strong confidence or reliance on God for the working of miracles. There three gifts are not miraculous, but the third has a particular relation to the miraculous powers. By the grace of healing, is understood the miracu-· loss gift of healing bodily difeases, either by the ' laying on of hands, or prayer, or by anointing with oil, &c. See Mark vi. By the working of · miracles, is understood the power of doing reater works than those last mentioned; as the railing of the dead to life; giving fight to the blind; cafting out devils, &c. By prophecy is meant not only the foretelling of things to come, and the discovery of hidden secrets, but also the gift of expounding deep mysteries by the affiftance of the Holy Ghost suggesting divers interpretations, which tend to instruction and edification. And if it be taken in this light, independently of the foreknowledge of things to come, it is not properly miraculous though it · belongs to the gifts which are called charifmatic. 'The discerning of spirits is the gift of diffin-· guishing the suggestions of the good spirit from those of the evil one. By the kinds of tongues, is fignified the gift of speaking divers languages; which was conferred upon the apostles, and some of the principle diciples in a more emment de-* pree, to enable them to preach the gospel, and to establish a regular ministry in different parts of the world. To others it was given in an in-'ferior

ferior degree, infomuch that feveral of the faithful were inspired by the Holy Ghost to utter
the praises of God in a language themselves did
not understand, as appears from a Cor. xiv. the
intent whereof seems to have been to foreshew
that the church of Christ should be spread
through all nations, and speak all languages.
By interpretation of speeches, is meant the gifts
of interpreting what was spoken by another in
an unknown tongue.

V. Now, two things are principally to be confidered concerning these graces. 1. Their extenfion. And, 2. The manner and means of their transmission or communication. With regard to their extension, as they were the operations of the Holy Ghost in those in whom he dwelt; so we find, that at the beginng, as many as received that divine spirit by the laying on of the hands of the apostles in the facrament of confirmation, received also more of those graces, according as it, feemed meet to him to bestow them. When he first descended upon the apostles, they and all the disciples that were with them received a very ample portion of them, and all fpoke in different tongues the wonderful works of God. The Jews being amazed at fo extraordinary an event, St Peter shewed them, from the testimony of the prophet Joel, that this was nothing but the accomplishment of what God had

long ago foretold by that prophet; by whom he promised, that at the last days, when the Redeemer should come, he would pour out his holy spirit upon all flesh, who would produce those admirable operations in his fervants, as fo many proofs, both to themselves and to the whole world, of the truth of his holy religion: The words of the prophet are these, And it shall come to pass in the last days, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your fons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my fervants and on my handmaids, I will pour out in those days of my spirit, and they shall prophecy, Acts ii. In these words, it is clear, that this promife was made not to fome few particulars, but to all God's faithful fervants on whom the holy spirit should descend: And a little after, St Peter assures us, that it was made not to the Jews only, but also to those of all other nations, whoever should be called to the faith of Christ; for the promise, says he, is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call, verse 20. And in fact we find that this promfe was generally fulfilled in all the faithful, Gentiles as well as Jews. Thus, when St Peter was preaching to Cornelius and his friends, the Holy Ghost came upon them, though Gentiles, in the fame visible manner he had come upon the apostles, and they all spake with tongues, Acts x. When St Philip

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Philip had converted the Samaritans, St Peter and St John went down from Jerusalem to confirm them, and laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Choft, Acts viii. who immediately produced in them the usual signs of his prefence, fo that all were fentible of it, in fo much that Simon the magician, who wondered beholding the figns and miracles which were done by Philip. wondered much more to fee the Holy Ghoft, by whom these miracles were chiefly performed, and along with him the power of miracles also communicated to all the people by the laying on of the hands of the apostles; and therefore offered them money to give to him the fame power they had. that on whomfoever he should lay his hands the Holy Ghost also should come. In like manner, St Paul finding certain disciples at Ephefus, who had not yet received, nor indeed heard of the Holy Ghoft. no fooner did he baptize them, and lay his hands upon them, than the Holy Ghoft came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophecied, Acts xix. 6. The above citation from 1 Cor. xii. shows that thefe graces were very common among them: and they are also taken notice of in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, and in that to the Galatians. From all which it appears, first, that the extenfion of these graces was at the beginning of Christianity very great; and that they were generally bestowed upon all Christians, but in such order and degree as the Holy Ghost thought proper.

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Secondly.

Secondly, That this was done chiefly by means of the facrament of confirmation, or the laying on of the hands of the chief pastors of the church after baptism: So that the apostles not only communicated these graces themselves to their converts along with the Holy Ghoft, the Author of them, by laying on of hands, but transmitted also to their succesfors in office the power of communicating them to others fuccessively, till the work of God should be accomplished. From the repeated testimony of the Christian writers during the first three ages of the church, it appears that these supernatural graces and miraculous powers continued to be bestowed on great numbers during all that period; and we find two very just reasons why they should have been so; first, Because the necessities of the Christian religion were much the same during all that time; for while the efforts of hell were joined with the greatest powers upon earth, animated by all the most violent passions of the human heart to persecute, oppress, and destroy the Christians during the first three ages, it was necessary that Almighty God should never be wanting in fuch circumstances to stretch out his hand in their defence, and continue his fupernatural and miraculous interpolition with them, both for their comfort and support, and for the confusion and conversion of their enemies: Secondly, Few or none embraced Christianity in those days of persecution, but did it from their heart; they had no worldly motive

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tive to induce them, no temporal views to perfuade them; the fole conviction of its being the only way to fave their fouls, was the motive for which they embraced it. Hence they were Christians in good earnest, ready to facrifice every thing for their faith, and therefore well disposed for receiving these supernatural influences of the divine spirit. But when the Roman emperors were converted to the faith of Christ, when Christianity was established by law, when all persecutions ceased, and it became even conducive to one's worldly interest to be Christian, the face of things was intirely changed. Christianity being then defended by the civil power, and every worldly motive concurring with those folid and convincing reasons on which it was founded, to induce men to embrace it, of course it stood no longer in need of the general continuation of those fupernatural instances of the divine approbation which had been necessary in the preceding ages of perfecution; and besides, from the concurrence of these same worldly motives, great numbers embraced the faith with other views than fuch as were purely spiritual, and carried a worldly spirit and corrupt heart even into the fanctuary of God: by which means vast numbers became Christians who were altogether indisposed for receiving those divine communications of the Holy Ghoft, which had been so liberally bestowed upon the generality of the faithful in the three former ages. About E 2 this

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this time, then, a ceffation of miracles is acknowledged to have taken place, and is attested by some of the greatest lights of the fourth century: But what kind of a cellation was it? a cellation of the above-named supernatural graces, both as to their extension, and as to the manner of their transmisfion. As to their extension, they were no longer communicated to the generality of Christians as they had been before; the generality of Christians were now become indisposed for receiving them; they were therefore bestowed now only upon the few, upon those chosen souls who, still preferving the primitive spirit of Christianity, lived with their hearts and affections, and often with their perfons also, sequestered from the world, and sought only after God in the purity of spirit. As to the manner of their transmiffion, because the Holy Ghost, when communicated to fouls by the laying on of hands in the facrament of confirmation, did not now give these external figns of his presence which he had done at the beginning, by the appearance of fiery tongues, or by bestowing the gifts of languages: Thefe, as we have feen, were necessary while the church continued under the pressure of perfecution; but that necessity was now at an end; and therefore, though the communication of the divine spirit, and the confirming and strengthening those who receive him, will continue to the end of time to be the never-ceasing effects of the sacrament of confirmation in the worthy receiver, yet

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yet this is now done in an invisible manner, without those exterior signs which were given in the earliest ages.

Now that this is the true nature of that ceffation of miracles which is acknowledged by the holy fathers of the fourth age to have happened before their days, is evident from the express declaration of St Augustine. This great faint having, in different places of his writings, mentioned this ceffation of miracles, and well aware what use the enemies of the church would be ready to make of fuch an acknowledgement, thought it necessary, in his book of retractations, to explain his meaning in those passages more precisely, which he does as follows: "What I also said, that those miracles were not allowed to continue to our times, lest the foul should always seek after things visible, and mankind should wax cold by their frequency who had been inflamed by their novelty, is certainly true. when hands are laid on the baptized, they do not receive the Holy Chost now in such a manner as to speak with the tongues of all nations, nor are the fick now cured by the shadow of Christ's preachers as they pass by them, and others such as these, which it is manifest did afterwards cease: But what I said is not so to be understood, as if no miracles are believed to be performed now in the name of Christ: For I my felf, when I wrote that very book, knew that a blind man had received his fight in the city of Milan, at the bodies of the Milanese martyrs, and E_3 *feveral*

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several others besides; nay, such numbers are performed in these our days, that I neither can know them all, nor, though I knew them, could I enumerate them :" St. Aug. Retract. lib. 1. cap. 13. 6 7. From this passage it is evident, that the cessation of miracles, acknowledged by the holy fathers of the fourth century, regards only the extension and visible signs of the communication of the charismatic graces, when the Holy Ghost was received by the laying on the hands after baptifm, or fome of those more extraordinary miracles which were performed in the apostle's days, such as curing the fick by their shadows, and the like. though they acknowledge a ceffation in this fense, yet they no less strenuously affert the continuation of the gift of miracles, and its actual exertion in numberless instances performed in their very days, and to many of which they themselves were eyewitneffes.

VII. Hence then the question concerning the continuation of miracles in the church is only with regard to these last. We do not inquire whether the Holy Ghost continues now to be communicated at confirmation, with those visible signs of his presence, the appearance of siery tongues, speaking all languages, and the like, which he displayed at the beginning; nor whether these and the other charismatic graces above-mentioned be now indiscriminately bestowed on all the faithful. It is plain

plain this is by no means the cafe, and it is acknowledged by all that a cellation of these took place before, or about the beginning of the fourth century. But the question is, Whether or not Almighty God has in every age of the church, down to these our days, raised up from time to time many holy people, whom he has replenished with his divine spirit, and by whom he has been pleased, on many different occasions, to perform numbers of miracles for ends of the fame nature, or fimilar to those, for which we know, and have feen above he actually did perform many great and stupenduous miracles by his holy fervants, under the Jewish dispensation, in every period during its continuation? This is the precise state of the question; and that Almighty God has actually done fo, is what I have now to prove. But it will throw a considerable light upon our proof, and show still further the nature and importance of this question, if we first take a view of the manner in which it has been treated by Dr Middleton and his Protestant antagonists, according to the different syftems which they have espoused.

VIII. The Doctor every-where professes the highest veneration for the Protestant religion, and assures us, towards the close of his introductory discourse, that his design in his work against the continuation of miracles, is to fix the religion of Protessants on its proper basis; that is, on the facred scriptures;

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scriptures; for these he professes the greatest regard, and on the credit of their testimony firmly believes all the miracles related in them, however great and amazing. He, of courfe, acknowledges that the power of working miracles was bestowed on the apostles, and on others during the lives of the apostles, but insists that it ceased intirely upon their decease, and never more appeared in the Christian world; and the whole tendency of his inquiry is to prove as a confequence of this opinion, that the pretended miracles of the primitive church were all mere fictions, Introd. Difc. p. lxxviii. edit. Lond. 1755. The motives which induced the Doctor to adopt this strange opinion were chiefly two; he found that many of the doctrines and practices which the Protestants condemn as the corruptions of Popery, were clearly taught by the Christian writers of the most primitive ages, and he enumerates feveral manifest and striking examples of this kind in different parts of his introductory discourse; he saw, that if true miracles were allowed to have been wrought in a church which taught and practifed these things, these things could by no means be condemned; and therefore concluded that it was absolutely necessary for the support of the Protestant religion that no such miracles should be allowed. Besides he was sensible, that if miracles in the first ages were admitted upon the credit of human testimony, notwithstanding these doctrines and practices, it would be ridiculous

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culous to deny them in after-ages, when equally well atteffed, merely because they were done in fayour of the same or similar doctrines: consequently, that to admit their existence in one age of the church upon human testimony, laid him under an unavoidable necessity of admitting them on the fame ground even to the present times; and therefore he' concludes again, that it is impossible the Protestant religion can stand or be defended, if the existence of miracles be allowed, even for one fingle age after the death of the apostles. this evidently appears throughout his preface, and the whole of his introductory discourse, partilarly from the following passages. In the preface, page v. he fays, the general approbation the introductory difcourse met with from those whose authority I chiefly value, has given me the utmost encouragement to perfevere in the profecution of my argument, as being of the greatest importance to the Protestant religion, and the fole expedient which can effectually secure it from being gradually undermined and finally subverted by the efforts of Rome. In his first entering upon his introductory discourse, he begins by observing the advantage the Roman church makes of the belief of a continuation of miracles in her communion, and that his fystem is the refult of his inquiring into the grounds of this plea; which system, says he, by the most impartial judgment that I am able to form, I take not only to be true, but useful also, and even necessary to the defence of Christianity, as it is generally received, and ought always to be defended, in Protestant churches.

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that to admit their exidence in one are of the IX. A few pages after, giving an account of the motives which induced him to this work, he fpeaks thus: I found my felf particularly excited to this task, by what I had occasionally observed and heard of the late growth of Popery in this kingdom, and the great number of Popish books which have been printed and dispersed among us, within these few years; in which their writers make much use of that prejudice in favours of primitive antiquity, which prevails even in this Protestant country, towards drawing weak people into their cause, and shewing their wor-Ship to be the best, because it is the most conformable to that ancient pattern. But the most powerful of all their arguments, and what gains them the most proselytes, is, their confident attestation of miracles, as subsisting still in their church, and the clear Succession of them, which they deduce through all history, from the apostolic times down to our own. This their apologists never fail to display with all the force of their rhetoric, and with good reason; since it is a proof, of all others the most Striking to vulgar minds, and the most decisive indeed to all minds, as far as it is believed to be true. Introd. p. xxxvi. This is very plain dealing; the continuation of miracles in the church is the most decifive proof of the truth of her doctrine; but as this

this is incompatible with Protestancy, the only way to secure this last is to adopt the Doctor's system, and absolutely to deny that ever any miracle was performed since the times of the apostles!

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X. The connection between miracles and Popery he observes as follows: After the conversion of the Roman empire to Christianity, we shall find the greatest part of their boasted miracles to have been wrought either by monks, or relicks, or the fign of the cross, or consecrated oil; wherefore, if we admit the miracles we must necessarily admit the rites for the fake of which they were wrought: they both rest on the same bottom, and mutually establish each other. For it is a maxim which must be allowed by all Christians, that whenever any facred rite or religious institution becomes the instrument of miracles, we ought to consider that rite as confirmed by divine approbation, Introd. p. Ivii. And a little after, reflecting on the impudence of Dr Chapman and other Protestant divines, who, convinced by the force of that authority by which the existence of miracles is proved, have acknowledged and defended them for feveral ages after the apostles, he says, Thus we fee to what a state of things the miracles of the fourth and fifth centuries would reduce us; they would call us back again to the old superstition of our ancestors, would fill us with monks, and relicks, and masses, and all the other trinkets

trinkets which the treasury of Rome can supply: For this is the necessary effect of that zeal which would engage us in the defence of them, p. lxi.

XI. To show the great advantage which his system gives for gaining the end proposed by it of disarming the Papists and securing the Protestant religion, he says, should the Romanists pretend to urge us with their miracles, and to shew the succession of them from the earliest ages, we have no reason to be moved at it, but may tell them without scruple that we admit no miracles but those of the scripture; and that all the rest are either justly suspected, or certainly forged. By putting the controversy on this issue, we shall either disarm them at once; or, if they persist in the dispute, may be sure to convict them of fraud and imposture, p. lxxxii.

XII. So far the Doctor displays the necessity he faw of establishing his system, from the impossibility of defending the Protestant religion, if any miracles are allowed to have been performed among the Papists; what follows will show the necessity he was under of admitting his system, even from the end of the apostolic age, from the invincible force of human testimony to prove the existence of miracles in all succeeding ages, if admitted in any one age after the apostles.

XIII. Speaking

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XIII. Speaking of the nature of the evidence by which the precise time of the duration of miracles should be determined, he observes, that the generality of writers appeal to the testimony of the earliest fathers, but without agreeing to what age this character of earliest fathers comes down; and then adds: But to whatever age he (the observator) may restrain it, the difficulty at last will be, to affign a reason why we must needs stop there. In the mean time, by his appealing thus to the earliest fathers only, as unanimous on this article, a common reader will be apt to infer, that the later fathers are more cold or diffident, or divided upon it; whereas the reverse of this is true; and the more we descend from those earliest fathers, the more strong and explicit we find their successors in attesting the perpetual succession and daily exertion of the same miraculous powers in their several ages: So that if the cause must be determined by the unanimous consent of fathers, we shall find as much reason to believe those powers were continued even to the latest ages as to any other, how early and primitive soever, after the days of the apostles, Pref. P. xiv. And a little after he adds, As far as church historians can illustrate or throw light upon any thing, there is not a single point in all history so constantly, explicitely, and unanimously affirmed by them all, as the continual succession of those powers through all ages, from the earliest father that first mentions them down to the Vol. II. time

time of the reformation: Which same succession is still farther deduced by persons of the most eminent character, for their probity, learning, and dignity in the Roman church to this very day. So that the only doubt that can remain with us is, whether the church historians are to be trusted or not? for if any credit be due to them in the present case, it must reach either to all or to none; because the reason of believing them in any one age will be found to be of equal force in all, so far as it depends on the characters of the persons attesting, or the nature of the things attested, Pref. P. xvii.

XIV. This uniformity in ecclefiaftical history, in attesting miracles in every age, is still further acknowledged as follows: It must be confessed, that this claim of a miraculous power, which is now peculiar to the church of Rome, was univerfally afferted and believed in all Christian countries, and in all ages of the church till the time of the reformation. For ecclefiastical history makes no difference between one age and another, but carries on the succession of its miracles, as of all other common events, though all of them indifferently, to that memorable period, Introd. P. xxxix.

XV. After relating the fentiments of Dodwell, Whifton, Waterland, and Chapman, who defend the continuation of miracles for fome ages after the apostles, according to their respective pe-Tiods,

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riods, and Dr Chapman brings them even down to the end of the fifth century, he adds, Thus these eminent divines pursuing their several systems, and ambitious of improving still upon each other's discoveries, seem unwarily to have betrayed the Protestant cause, by transferring the miraculous powers of the church, the pretended ensigns of truth and orthodoxy, into the hands of its enemies .- For it was in these very primitive ages, and especially in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, those flourishing times of miraculous powers, as Dr Chapman calls them, in which the chief corruptions of Popery were either actually introduced, or the seeds of them so effectually sown, that they could not fail of producing the fruits which we now fee. By thefe corruptions, I mean the institution of monkery; the worship of relicks; invocation of saints; prayers for the dead; the superstitious use of images; of the sacraments; of the sign of the cross; and of consecrated oil; by the efficacy of all which rites, and as a proof of their divine origin, perpetual miracles are affirmed to have been wrought in these very centuries, Introd. P. xlv. He then goes on to give examples of all these in the earliest ages, ending with a rebuke to Dr Berriman, who defends the miracles of the fixth century, as far as St Gregory the great, for which the Doctor fays of him, P. lxix. Thus the miraculous powers of the church are expressly avowed by him to the end even of the sixth century, in which Popery had F2

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had gained a full establishment; yet this Protestant divine cannot conceive the least reason to dispute the miraculousness of those facts which established it; nay, defies any man to prove that miracles were yet ceased in this Popish age. From all which he makes this just conclusion, Since the zeal then of these Protestant guides has now brought us within the very pale of the Romish church, I see nothing which can stop their progress from the sixth age down to the present-for each succeeding age will furnish miracles and witnesses too of as good credit as those of the sixth, page lxxi. And afterwards refuming this point he declares, that by granting them (the Romanists) but a single age of miracles after the times of the apostles, we shall be entangled in a series of difficulties, whence we can never fairly extricate ourselves till we allow the same powers also to the present age, Introd. P. lxxxii.

XVI. It was necessary to give this extract of Dr Middleton's sentiments in his own words, because it is in this that we discover to the bottom the origin and rise of his extraordinary system, and the true motives which induced him to adopt and publish it to the world. We here see evidently, that it was not a rational and consequential result of sacts and just reasoning, but a preconceived opinion which he was forced to embrace from the impossibility of otherwise desending the Protestant religion; he was sensible of the insuperable

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insuperable force which the claim to miracles gives the Roman Catholics over their Protestant adverfaries; he faw the weakness of every thing that had been faid against them by Protestants, whilst miracles are allowed to have been wrought among them; he faw, in fine, that what Protestants call the corruptions of Popery, are to be found in the earliest ages of Christianity, and that it would be ridiculous to allow the miracles of those ages on human testimony, and deny those of after-ages, though equally attested; and from these clear truths he concluded, that the only expedient which can effectually secure the Protestant religion from being undermined and subverted by the efforts of Rome, was to strike a bold stroke at once, and absolutely to deny all miracles whatfoever, fince the days of the apostles. This resolution being once taken, which the necessities of the reformation obliged him to do, the next thing was to find out fuch plaufible and apparent arguments as might ferve to support: it, and give it at least a colour of reason; and here indeed it must be owned that he has done every thing in defence of his bad cause, which could posfibly have been expected from a penetrating genius, an extensive reading, and a determined resolution to use every possible art to support it: But as all preconceived opinions, which are not the refult of just reasoning or accurate observation, but first adopted from whatever motive, and them reasons sought out to defend them, are seldome any thing elfe than the airy flights of fancy, or F 3 the

the despairing necessities of falsehood, and when examined are found to be void of all folidity; fo the Doctor's favourite fystem, when brought to the test of found reasoning, is found to be without any foundation at all, and productive of the most fatal consequences. This has been shown in the most fatisfactory manner by the Doctor's learned adverfaries of his own communion, who have at the fame time fully vindicated the characters of the holy fathers of the primitive ages, from the shocking representation Doctor Middleton gives of them; for the Doctor grounds the whole proof of his fystem upon this foundation, that all these primitive fathers, and indeed the most venerable Christian writers in all ages, and all church historians, are to be looked upon as a parcel of credulous and superstitious fools, or a set of crafty knaves, possessed with strong prejudices, and an enthusiastic zeal for every doctrine of the Christian religion, scrupling no art or means by which they might propagate the same; and, in short, were all of a character, from which nothing could be expected that was candid and impartial, Preface, P. xxviii. In order to establish this point, with which his fystem must stand or fall, the Doctor has exhausted the whole force of his invention and rhetoric, but all to no purpose; his Protestant adverfaries have examined him step by step; have detected his false glosses and sophistry; and have proved, beyond reply, that those venerable writers

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of the primitive ages, were men of the most unspotted characters, of undoubted probity and unquestionable veracity, and were most competent
judges of the truth of the miracles they related,
having either been eye-witnesses of them themselves, or having had them from such; or that the
miracles were of the most public nature, notoriously known to the whole people, among whom
they spoke of them.

XVII. This alone is fufficient to destroy all the Doctor has built on so sandy a foundation; but his Protestant opponents have gone further, and shown most evidently that the system he proposes is a fource of the following most shocking confequences: 1mo, That it destroys the faith of all hiftory: He acknowledges himself, that, as far as the church historians can illustrate or throw light upon any thing, there is not a fingle point in all history fo constantly, explicitely, and unanimously affirmed by them all, as the continual succession of miraculous powers throughout all ages. If, therefore, notwithstanding this concurrent attestation, we are to look upon this fuccession as an absolute falsehood, how will it be possible to give credit to any historian whatever, or to believe any single fact attested by others, and of which we were not eyewitnesses? 2do, That it opens a door to univertal scepticism: This is a natural consequence of the former. 3tio, That it undermines the very foundation

foundation of the Christian religion itself. For if the immediate fucceffors of the apostles, who had been their disciples and instructed by them, were a fet of knaves and impostors, as he pretends, is it not natural to fuspect (to use his own argument on a fimilar occasion) that so bold a defiance of truth could not be acquired at once? And, if this his argument be good, we must conclude that these first impostors had learned their knavery from their masters, and of course that the apostles themselves were as great knaves and impostors as their disciples; besides, as, according to Protestant principles, the Bible is the fole compleat ground of that religion, and as it is a notorious fact, that we at present have received the Bible as divinely inspired only upon the testimony of the primitive fathers and their fuccessors, to our own days; if these were all a set of crafty knaves or filly fools, as the Doctor represents them, and of fuch a character that nothing candid or impartial can be expected from them; nay, fuch impostors that we cannot depend upon their word, even when relating facts, which they declare they faw with their own eyes; how is it possible we can believe the Bible to be the word of God, which comes to us only through fuch a channel? 'Or what fecurity can we have, that fuch a continued fuccession of villains, who, as he affures us, would flick at no art or means to propagate their principles, have not corrupted the scriptures, and imposed their own

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own forgeries on mankind instead of the word of God? And if so, there is at once an end of the Christian religion itself, upon Protestant principles!

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XVIII. To these a Roman Catholic must make another obvious reflection, namely, that the whole of what the Doctor fays, his fystem, with all its proofs, is founded upon the most childish of all suppositions, a mere begging of the question; a suppolition unworthy of a man of lense, much more of one who pretends to be a teacher of mankind! He supposes that the respect which the Roman Catholics, after the example of the most primitive ages, pay to the relicks of faints, that their prayers for the dead, their belief of a purgatory, invoking the prayers of faints, and the like, which he calls the corruptions of Popery, are really such in themfelves; that fuch doctrines are impious, blasphemous, and superstitious; and upon this supposition alone he condemns all the miracles related by the fathers of the fourth age, not only in general and for the greatest part, but intirely and universally as the effects of fraud and imposture, Introd. p. lxv. In this age, fays he, all its most illustrious fathers, now faints of the Catholic church, St. Athanafius, St. Epiphamius, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Ambrofe, St. Ferom, St. Austin, and St. Chryfoftom, have feverally recorded and folemnly attested a number of miracles, Said to be wrought in confirmation

mation of some favourite institutions of those days, which, in the judgment of all the learned and candid Protestants, are manifestly sicitious and utterly incredible, Introd. p. lxv. Now, who does not fee that this is a mere begging the question? a suppoling and taking for granted what he ought to prove? However incredible these institutions may appear to the Doctor and his Protestant brethren, they are far from appearing so to the whole body of Roman Catholics, who are endued with common fense and found judgment as well as the Doctor and his brethren; these receive them as divine institutions, and believe them as truths revealed by God, and among many other proofs which they bring to show they are so, appeal to numberless miracles attested by the most credible eye-witnesses in every age, and recorded in the most authentic manner as performed by means of these very institutions, and consequently in approbation of them: How childish is it then in the Doctor, when, instead of pretending to prove that these institutions are fictitious or incredible, he takes it for granted they are so, and upon this filly pretence alone would have the world adopt a fystem injurious in the highest degree to the characters of the most venerable personages that ever have appeared in the Christian world, and big with all those absurd consequences, which, as his own Protestant brethren have demonstrated, necessarily flow from it! how glorious a triumph must it be

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to every thinking Roman Catholic, to see one of the most learned and most determined adversaries of his holy religion reduced to such despicable shifts in attacking it! yet it is upon the above pitiful supposition that the Doctor's whole fabric is built; for, taking it for granted for the above-mentioned reason that the miracles related by the holy fathers of the sourch age are all siction and imposture, he sixes his post here, and by a pretence of argument as weak as its foundation, he includes all the miracles, related by those of preceeding and subsequent ages, in the same condemnation.

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XIX. But to show the futility of this conduct of the Doctor in its proper colours, let us apply it to a fimilar case. It is certain that the mysteries of the Trinity, incarnation, original sin, and the other fundamental articles of Christianity, appear as incredible to the Deifts and Atheifts, as any of what the Doctor calls the corruptions of Popery can posfibly appear to him, or to any other learned and candid Protestant; put then the Doctor's argument in the mouth of a Deist against these great Christian truths; hear him haranguing against the books of the gospel, against Christ and his apostles, and rejecting with disdain all the miracles recorded of them, for this plain reason, because they were said to have been wrought in confirmation of some favourite opinions of theirs, the Trinity, the incarnation, and other fuch, which, in the judgment of all the learned and candid Deists, are manifestly, fictitiously, and utterly incredible: What answer could the Doctor make to this argument? It is, in fact, the very argument used by the Deists against the miracles of Christ and his apostles; and it is evidently the fame to all intents and purpoles with the one the Doctor uses against the miracles of their fucceffors; and has perfectly the same force in the one case as in the other: If, then, he allows it, he must renounce his Christianity; if he condemns it, he, by the fame breath, condemns his own darling fystem, and all those childish arguments on which he pretends to build it. What a comfort and fatisfaction must this again be to every ferious Roman Catholic, to fee that even a Doctor Middleton cannot attack his holy religion but by fuch arguments as at the fame time must sap the very foundation of Christianity itself, so that Popery or Christianity must stand or fall together !

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XX. I cannot leave this subject without further observing, that the Doctor himself seems to have been very sensible of all the consequences which his opponents deduce from his system; for he calls it in his preface, page 1. an experiment big with consequences; but whatever these be, it gives him no pain: To speak my mind freely, says he, on the subject of consequences: I am not so scrupulous perhaps in my regard to them as many of my profession are apt to be, Pres. p. viii. And when answering the objection

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objection made against his system, as rendering precarious and uncertain the Bible itself, he answers with the greatest coolness, "though we allow the " objection to be true, it cannot hurt my argu-" ment; for if it be natural and necessary that the " craft and credulity of witnesses should always " detract from the credit of their testimony, who " can help it? Or on what is the confequence to " be charged but on the nature and constitution " of the things from which it flows? Or, if the " authority of any books be really weakened by " the character I have given of the fathers, will " it follow from thence that the character must " necessarily be false, or that the fathers were " neither crafty nor credulous? That furely can " never be pretended." This is plain dealing indeed, but a strange kind of language from one who calls himfelf a Christian: But what can he do? There is no other possible expedient for effectually securing the Protestant religion against the efforts of the church of Rome: And therefore, right or wrong, be the consequences what they will, this plan must be pursued, and this system defended, ware become a program

XXI. Upon the whole, then, we may observe of the Doctor, 1. That, from his very outsetting, he proceeds upon a mere begging of the question, supposing the chief thing he ought to prove. 2. That his system is sounded upon a most unjust Vol. II.

and uncharitable defamation, not of one or two particular perions, but of all and every one of the greatest lights of the Christian world; men nevered in their days for their eminent fanctity and learning, and whose memories have been held venerable in all fucceeding ages; and these he defames not in one century or two, but in every age, from the times of the apostles to these our days. That the arguments he uses in support of his fystem, are just the same that a Deift or Atheist uses against the miracles of Christ and his apostles, or that a heathen would have used against those of Moses and the prophets; and their strength is exactly the fame in either case. 4. That the neceffary confequences of his fystem manifestly tend to destroy the credit of all history, and undermine the authority of the very Bible itself. All which has been proved beyond reply by the Doctor's antagonists, even of the Protestant religion. hally focuring the Frateslant religion against the

Having, thus taken a view of Dr Middleton's fystem, and his manner of managing his argument, from which we have got some very important lights for our purpose, I proceed now to consider his Protestant antagonists, and see what discoveries can be made from them.

XXII. Those learned gentlemen of the Protestant religion who have appeared in the field against Doctor Middleton in this dispute, were

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all under one and the fame necellity of proving thefe two points. That the power of working milrucles continued in the church for a certain period after the apostolic age; and, That this power was intirely withdrawn after that period. As Christians, they were obliged to defend the first of these propositions; and, as Protestants, they were under a necessity of supporting the second. They faw the mortal flab which the Doctor's lystem gives to the Christian revelation, and the other flocking confequences that flow from it, and therefore thought it incumbent on them, in defence of that revelation, to prove that miracles thid most certainly continue in the church for fome time after the apostles; but they saw, at the same times that if this power be allowed to have continued in the church without limitation to the prefent times, it would give an unanswerable argument in favours of Popery; to the utter condemnation of the Reformation; and therefore they were under an equal necessity of stopping in their career, and of confining the continuation of this power within fisch bounds as they thought most proper and convenient. And in these two points these writers all agree, notwithstanding the great difference among them about the length of time, during which they allow this power of working miracles to have continued. In this, indeed; they differ exceedingly; some, as we have seen above, affigning the end of the third century for G 2 1157/3

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the æra of the cellation of miracles, some carrying them down to the end of the fourth, others admitting those of the fifth age, and others allowing many true and real miracles to be incontestably proved, even to the end of the fixth century. One should naturally conclude from this diffension among them about one of the two great points of the dispute, that the arguments brought for the cessation of miracles at these respective periods, cannot possibly be conclusive; for, were the reafons for the ceffation of miracles at any of these periods more folidly founded than the others, there could be no diffension; but all would a. gree on that æra which was proved by the most conclusive arguments: Seeing, therefore, they do not agree, but each combatant thinks the arguments for the æra he affigns to be the strongest, this is an undeniable proof, that they are all equally inconclusive, and at best but hypothetical and systematical. But, however these writers differ in their conclusions, when we examine them attentively, we find they are all the fame at the bottom, and proceed upon perfectly the fame principles, to wit, their aversion to Popery, and only differ in their ideas of Popish doctrines, and about the time when those doctrines began. No true miracles must be allowed after the corruptions of Popery were introduced into the church! This is the grand principle in which they all agree among themselves, and (what is chiefly to be observed) in which they also agree even

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even with Doctor Middleton! But what are the corruptions of Popery? and when did they begin! In this they differ widely. To Dr Middle! ton nothing is more plain, than that " the fight " of the crofs; praying for the dead; mixing " the cup with water; fending the confecrated " elements to the absent; keeping the confecrat-" ed bread at home in private houses and a for private use a looking upon it as a defence " against devils ; stiling the Eucharist the facri-" fice of the body of Christ; offering it up in " memory of the martyrs; calling it most tre-" mendous mystery, dreadful solemnity, and the " like :" To the doctor, I fay, nothing is more plain, than that all this is rank Popery: "What " is all this (fays he), but a description of that fa-" crifice of the mass, which the Romanists offer at " this day, both for the living and the dead?" Introd. p. liii. But the Doctor found all thefe things manifestly taught and practifed by the fathers and Christians of the second and third ages, by Justin martyr, by Cyprian, by Tertullian. whose plain testimonies he cites for that purpose : consequently, according to the idea he has of Pos pish corruptions; and in conformity to the above principle, which he lays down in common with his adverfaries, he is forced, at all events, to reject all miracles even in these early ages, and to maintain that the cellation took place just after the age of the apostles. Others who do not look upon the G 3 above 1931

above articles as Popish corruptions, but think the fign of the Crofs, which the church of Eng. land uses in baptism, may be practised without idolatry, and that mixing water in the cup, and even offering up the elements as an oblation or facrifice, are confonant to primitive purity; nay, who even think that praying for the dead may be lawfully used, and with those Protestant bishops whom the Duchess of York, King James the II. of England's first wife, consulted upon that head, wish that this and some other points had not been put away by their reforming ancestors: People, I fay, of this turn of thought, and who at the fame time have a great effeem for antiquity, and wish to have it thought that the religious principles they embrace were all authorifed and followed by the Christian world in the most primitive ages; these of course contend, that as Popery (that is what they look upon to be Popery) did not commence for some ages after the apostles, there is no more any reason for denying the existence and continuation of miracles during these pure ages, which therefore they endeavour to prove against Dr Middleton, by the force of human testimony, by the authority of the Christian writers, of the holy fathers and church historians, who flourished during the period they affign for their continuation. But it is particularly to be remarked in thele gentlemen, that although they have no other posfible way of proving this continuation down to their

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their respective assigned periods than this testimony, and declare it to be, in their opinion, afull and fatisfactory proof that length; yet, the moment after these their respective æras, they deny it all strength, and look upon it as utterly incapable of proving the existence of one single miracle. Why fo? In the judgment even of their Protestant brethren, the testimony is the fame afterwards as before, nor can any rational cause be assigned why it should not be of equal efficacy in both cases; but if it were allowed to proceed, it would favour Popery, and therefore, be the consequences what you please, it must then be rejected. But who does not fee that this is mere trifling, and a most convincing proof that all they alledge upon this subject is nothing but opinion and prejudice in favours of a preconceived hypothesis, which each one assumes to himself as best fuits his fancy? that the residual by which this of the thank pre-

XXIII. Hence it appears, that Dr Middleton and all his Protestant opponents are at the bottom in the self-same predicament, and all build upon the self-same tottering foundation, a putid begging of the question, and supposing as a truth what they can never prove; nay, what is not only called in question, but absolutely denied, and looked upon as impiety and heresy by the greatest bulk of Christendom; consequently, whatever weight this procedure may have against Dr Middleton's syst-

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tem and his argumentation, in the month of his opponents, it must militate with equal force against all their different systems; for, as they are all built upon the same sandy soundation, he and they must all stand or fall together.

capable of waving the collecties of one tiends XXIV, This, however, will better appear when we take a more minute view of their manner of managing their caufe, in which we shall see a most exact conformity between them and the Doctor; and that the fame arguments by which they show the falsehood of the Doctor's system, and prove that the power of miracle's most certainly continued in the church after the apostolic age, with the felf-fame ftrength and energy show the fallehood of their own various fystems, and equally prove that thefe powers most certainly continued in the church after the different periods which each of them respectively affigues; and that the reasons, by which they as Christians presend to prove, that the miratles faid to have been wrought after their supposed periods of deffation, are all falfeliood and forgery, have the felf-fame force in the mouths of Heathens and Deifts to prove that the miracles they admit, and even the scripture miracles themselves, are all of the same kind, fulled ben buirth vietalede and malfen

XXV. As it would be by far too tedious, and indeed only an endless repetition of the same thing,

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thing, to examine each of their systems apart, I shall confine myself to the one which is most commonly received by the generality of Protestants, to wit, That the power of miracles continued in the church till about the end of the third, or beginning of the fourth century, and was then totally withdrawn. This opinion is adopted, and strenuoully defended by Mr Brook, in his Examination of the Free Inquiry; in which work he has difplayed, in a very mafterly way, all that can be faid in defence of this system, or indeed of any of them; for the arguments are the same in all, and only arbitrarily applied to their different periods, without any folid reason for appropriating them to one more than to another. So that in examining what Mr Brook advances upon this fystem, we, in fact, examine all the others at the same time.

XXVI. I observed above, that those who have written against the Doctor's system among the Protestants, have chiefly these two points in view, and that their whole aim is to establish them, to wit, That the power of working miracles continued in the Christian church for some ages after the apostles; and that it was totally withdrawn from her at those particular periods which each of them respectively assigns. The first of these propositions they defend against Dr Middleton, the other against the Roman Catholics. We must consider

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many received by the generality of Brenchese XXVII. In proving that miracles continued to be performed in the church for forme time after the apostles, two kinds of arguments are used; the first is drawn from presumptive evidence, the fecond from positive testimony. The first of these shows, that it was reasonable to expect miracles after the apostolic age; takes away all such prejudices as might arise in the mind against them; and of course prepares the mind to believe them; the other directly shows that they actually were performed, and the two together give an intire conviction. "The miracles of the earlier ages of " the Christian church (fays Mr Brook) are pro-" bable in themselves; there is a strong pre-" fumptive evidence of their truth and reality. "There is no fufficient reason to suspect that " evidence; of confequence, when well attefted " they are equally to be believed with any other "common historical facts. They are not there-" fore to be fet afide, where there is the unani: "mous testimony of credible withesles, without " destroying the faith of all history; without in-"troducing an universal scepticism." Brook's Examin. p. 51. And a little after he adds, If facts probable in themselves, the truth of which we have no reason to suspect from the " nature of the thing, but, on the contrary, " there

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4 there appear manifest reasons why we should " believe them, are nevertheless to be set aside 4 as doubtful and incredible, though supported " by the unanimous tellimony of fuch perfons who lived in those very times, and were evewitnesses of them; all historic evidence must rest on so sandy a foundation as to be utterly " insupportable by human testimony. There can " remain no one rational and fleady principle to di-" rect us in judging of any past events represented" " to us in writing," p. co. This, then, is the fum of the proof used by these writers for the continuation of miracles in the church after the days of the apostles, presumptive evidence, which makes it refonable to expect them in those times; and positive testimony, which expressly afferts them.

XXVIII. This prefumptive evidence, as difplayed by Mr Brook, for the three first ages, consists of the following arguments: 1. "If the hand
"of God did continue to co-operate visibly with the
saints of the apostolic age, throughout the whole
"ministry of all the apostles, it is not likely that
"this extraordinary providence should vanish instantaneously, and leave the gospel to make the
"rest of its way by its own genuine strength—
"Such a supposition is utterly inconsistent with
"the natural notions we have of God's proceed"ings, as well as with what is revealed about
"them—Whenever the Supreme Being works
"any

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" any changes in nature, those changes are always " made, not on a fudden, but in time, and by flow "degrees; and in all the dispensations of his " providence to the fons of men, as far as we "know from reason only, the method of his pro-" ceedings is not hafty and violent, but ever gen-"tle and gradual. The Jewish religion was esta-" blished by an extraordinary providence. The "divine interpolitions in favour of that people " were very frequent and notorious, till they " had got quiet possession of the promised land, " and till their whole polity, civil as well as re-" ligious, was effectually established; but even, "though fuch extraordinary interpolitions be-" came less frequent, they were not totally with-" drawn; God still continued to shew among his " peculiar people, at certain times, visible and "fupernatural tokens of his almighty power " and over-ruling providence-And afterwards, " in the days of Elijah and Elisha, when the " frequency of these divine interpolitions was re-" newed, it did not vanish instantaneously at the " death of these two prophets; it was gradually " withdrawn. Why then should it be thought " an improbable thing, that God fhould act in " the fame manner in defence and support of the "Christian religion? What reason is there to sup-" pose that he should be more favourable to the " religious dispensation of Moses, than to that of " his own Son?"

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2. Had the miraculous powers been immediately withdrawn upon the death of the apostles, it must have been of the greatest prejudice to religion; for, by this means, the gospel " must have " been left in a naked and defenceless state, to " become a prey to the prejudices, to the malice. " and to the outrage of men. The immediate " fuccessors of the apostles must have fallen into " the utmost discouragement, discontent and de-" fpondency of mind, feeing they had the fame " difficulties to struggle with as those before " them, from a malicious and perverse world; " and yet, perceiving they had none of those " powers and affiftances to relieve and fupport "them, which had been of late fo liberally be-" stowed upon the disciples of Jesus in the pre-" ceeding age: What an obstruction must this " experience have occasioned to the furthe-"rance of the gospel? What an aversion to it " must it have caused in some? What apostacy in "others? What dejection; what murmuring; " what despair in all? Let a man seriously and " impartially reflect on these things, and then " judge, whether it be not probable, that the " fame extraordinary providence which accom-" panied the apostles and other Christians upon "the first preaching of the gospel, continu-" ed to exert itself in their favour during the " whole ministry of the apostles; and whether, " upon the death of them, it is likely that it should VOL. II.

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"cease at once, and not rather that it visibly
resided in the Christian church some time
afterwards, and was at last gradually with
drawn, as the real exigencies of the church
were constantly and by degrees lessening, and
the continuance of it made by that means less
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3. " The necessity of divine interpositions in " the administration of ecclesiastical affairs in "those earlier ages of the church, make it rea-" fonable to believe, that the fame extraordinary " providence, by which these things were regu-" lated during the lives of the apoliles, did conti-" nue to direct and encourage the Christians fome " time afterwards." It was a thing of the greatest consequence in the infancy of the gospel, that "no person should be admitted to any high office in " the church, but fuch only as were properly qua-" lified. Nothing could have given greater offence " to the Christian converts; nothing could have " brought a more just imputation upon the apos tles themselves, or have been a more reasonable " obstruction to the success of their labours, both " among Jews and Gentiles, than to have observed fuch perfons dignified with the most emi-" nent parts of the ministry, who were either of " bad principles or exceptionable conduct." Now this could never have been avoided, except either "the apostles had been endowed with G fome

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" fome extraordinary powers in making choice of " pastors to succeed them, or some visible ma-" nifestations of the spirit of God had appeared " at their appointment;" as was the cafe when Saul and Barnabas were feparated by the Holy Ghoft, for the work to which he called them, or that the persons chosen had been eminent for their extraordinary graces, and endowed with power from above, as were Stephen and Philip, the deacons: As therefore the fame necessity of holy pastors continued for the ages after the apostles as had been in their days, "May we not fairly " conclude, from the great expediency and ne-" ceffity of the thing, that the immediate fuccef-" fors of the apostles were assisted by the same ex-" traordinary means, and possessed of the same ex-"traordinary powers? Is it to be imagined, that " the providence of God, which was fo profuse " of its extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers "during the lives of the apostles, as even to im-" part them to numbers of the laity and the lowest " of the people, (hould immediately, after their " deaths, become fo sparing of them, as to re-" fuse them even to the most eminently distinguish-" ed among the Christians for their superior piety " and virtue, and to whom the whole manage-" ment of the church discipline, and the de-" fence and support of the Christian cause, were " intirely committed?"

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4. The circumstances of those times confirm all the above: "The Christians were furrounded on " all fides with the most inveterate enemies, and " fituated in the midft of a people wholly devoted " to the groffest and most determined bigotry and " fuperstition, and totally abandoned to the grea-" test profligacy of manners. The doctrines of the " Christians, which have fo great a contrariety to " the passions and prejudices of men, exposed " them every where to the greatest ignominy and " contempt, and brought on them a train of the fe-" verest calamities, which the most virulent ma-" lice, inflamed and exasperated with the most out. " rageous zeal, as well civil as religious, could con-" trive. Now, if ever God has visibly interposed " in the affairs of men, is it to be supposed that, in " fuch circumstances, this same almighty Being " would fuffer his most faithful fervants to be ex-" pofed to fuch cruelty, merely on account of their " fidelity to him, without giving them any mani-" festations of his power and presence for their " comfort and support?" Or how is it possible that his religion should have subsisted without them? how much more impossible would it be still that it should, in these circumstances, have made profelytes of its very enemies, yea, and triumphed at last over all its adversaries, if it had not been supported by visible interpositions of the divine approbation? Human nature, left to itself, must have funk under the pressure of such a complication of mifery,

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f mifery, fery, and been at last absolutely overpowered by fuch heavy and weighty calamities. Under thefe circumstances, therefore, nothing appears sufficient to account for the uncommon progress of the Christian religion, but frequent and visible interpositions of the Deity. Doctor Middleton allows, in his preface, that, " in the first planting of the gospel, mi-" raculous powers were wanting to enable the a-" postles the more easily to over-rule the invete-" rate prejudices, both of Jews and Gentiles, and " to bear up against the discouraging shocks of po-" pular rage and perfecution." May it not then reasonably be presumed, that the same extraordinary powers were continued after the apostles' days, while the fame, and even greater prejudices continued, and while the popular rage and persecutions were even more violent?

5. The behaviour of the primitive martyrs is another strong proof of the same thing; their courage, constancy, and patience, accompanied with that astonishing spirit of meekness, humility, charity, and joy discoverable in the midst of their extreme misery, and of the most exquisite tortures, clearly point out to us that there must have been a divine and supernatural power bestowed upon them, which could support them in such trying circumstances, and raise up human weakness to such amazing and heroic fortitude: Mr Brook dwells a long time upon this argument taken from the mar-

tyrs; but what is here observed I take to be the strength of what he says.

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XXIX. After displaying these presumptive arguments, he concludes thus: " Dr Middleton, and every other man who professes himself a Christian, must allow, that miracles were wrought in great abundance during the lives of " the apostles; and that the Christian religion was at first published and propagated by an extraordinary providence. The question then et will be, Whether we have any probability of " reason to conclude, that the same extraordinary of providence did continue after their decease? If "the probability of an event is to be determined by the likelihood of its happening, and if that " thing is allowed to be likely to happen, which " has frequently, and in a variety of inflances, already come to pass: then it may reasonably be prefumed, that, if there were frequent interpolitions of the Deity in the times of the apoltles for manifest and important reasons, it is ikely that, in the ages immediately fucceeding to the apostolic, the same extraordinary interpo-" fitions should be continued, in similar cases, and where the fame manifest and important reasons prefent themselves. Probability, according to " Mr Hume in his effay on miracles, rifes from a " fuperiority of chances on any side; and according as this Superiority increases and surpasses the opse posite

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e opposite posite chances, the probability receiveth a proportionable increase, and begets a higher degree of
belief or assent on that side in which we discover
the superiority. Therefore, where an event
has been frequently brought about, in particular circumstances, there is a probability of the
lar circumstances. In this manner Mr Brook
displays the presumptive evidence for the continuation of miracles in the church during the first three
ages, the period he assigns for their existence.

XXX. On taking a view of these reasons it appears, that they may all be reduced to this one; the exigencies and needs of the Christian church, in the particular circumstances of these primitive ages, made it becoming the divine providence to assist and protect her by supernatural and miraculous interpositions; therefore it is reasonable to believe he did so, especially as it is acknowledged this was the case in the apostolic age, when the circumstances were similar.

XXXI. The fame prefumptive arguments are made use of by the other writers on this subject, only extending their energy each to the particular period which he thinks sit to assign for the continuation of miracles, as Mr Brook here does to the first three ages. "It will be observed," says the Observator on the introductory discourse, p. 25.

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"that this promife (viz. of working miracles) was not made to the apostles personally, but to them that should believe through their preach-"ing, without any limitation of time for the con-"tinuance of these powers to their days. And when it is considered how great a part of the "heathen world remained unconverted after their days, it is no unreasonable supposition that these " powers did not expire with the apostles, but " were continued to their fuccessors, in the work of " propagating the gospel." To the same purpose, Le Moine, in the postscript to his work on miracles, fays, "Our Saviour, before he left the world, " promifes these powers, not only to the apostles, " but to private Christians-And as Christ's pro-" mife is without any limitation of time, we may " reasonably suppose that they lasted as long as " the church had an immediate occasion for them, " fuch as the farther conversion of the world—It is therefore highly probable, if not absolutely certain, that they did actually subsist in the church " for fome considerable time after the days of the " apostles." Thus these Protestant adversaries of Dr Middleton's fystem all agree in this principle, that the prefumptive evidence for the continuation of miracles, drawn from the exigencies and necessities of the church during the different periods they affign, is just and reasonable, and affords a very high probability that they actually did exist during thefe ages. XXXII.

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XXXII. But what is most furprising, even Dr Middleton himfelf agrees with them in this principle, and readily admits the force of this prefumptive evidence for proof of the existence of miracles; only he craves the fame liberty which they take of admitting its force during fuch a period of time as he thinks proper, and no farther; that is, he confines it to the apostolic age alone, instead of extending it to any succeeding ara, as they do. Let us hear his own words: "My opinion," fays he, " in fhort is this, that in those first efforts of plant-" ing the gospel, after our Lord's ascension, the extraordinary gifts which he had promifed were " poured out in the fullest measure on the apostles, and those other disciples whom he had or-" dained to be the primary instruments of that great work, in order to enable them more easily to over-" rule the inveterate prejudices both of the Jews " and Gentiles, and to bear up against the discou-" raging shocks of popular rage and persecution, which they were taught to expect in the novi-" ciate of their ministry. But in process of time. " when they had laid a foundation fufficient to fuf-" tain the great fabric defigned to be erected upon " it, and by an invincible courage had conquered " the first and principal difficulties, and planted " churches in all the chief cities of the Roman " empire, and fettled a regular ministry to succeed " them in the government of the fame; it may " reasonably be presumed, that as the benefit of " miraculous

"miraculous powers began to be less and less " wanted, in proportion to the increase of those churches, fo the use and exercise of them began " gradually to decline: And as foon as Christia-" nity had gained an establishment in every quar-" ter of the known world, that they were finally " withdrawn, and the gospel left to make the " rest of its way by its own genuine strength, and " the natural force of those divine graces with " which it was fo richly stored, Faith, Hope, and " Charity .- And all this, as far as I am able to " judge from the nature of the gifts themselves, and from the instances or effects of them which "I have any way observed, may probably be " thought to have happened while fome of the apostles were still living, who, even in the times " of the gospel, appear, on several occasions, to have been destitute of any extraordinary gifts: " And of whose miracles, when we go beyond the " limits of the gospel, we meet with nothing in the " later histories on which we can depend, or no-" thing rather but what is apparently fabulous." Pref. to the Inq. page 26.

XXXIII. In these words the Doctor fairly acknowledges the three principal prefumptive arguments used, as above, by Mr Brook; he grants that a fudden change from the plenitude of miracles, wrought at first by the apostles, to a total cessation of them, is not to be supposed; and theree intraculous

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fore alledges that these powers were withdrawn gradually; he confesses that the necessities of the gospel, at its first appearance, gives a just presumption to believe that these powers continued till it was fufficiently established, and he allows that the circumstances of the times, at the first publication of the gospel, made miracles necessary to overrule these prejudices and difficulties it had to encounter. The only difference is, that he confines these necessities of the church within the narrow bounds of the apostolic age; whereas Mr Brook extends them to the first three centuries, as others do to the end of the fourth, fifth, or fixth. To act consequentially, then the Doctor must give some folid reafons why thefe prefumptive arguments, which he allows to have had fo much weight in the first age, should have none at all after that period ; he gives his reasons, which we shall now examine, and fee the replies made to them by his adverfaries. ther are with equal force remeted against them-

XXXIV. His first reason is against the argument drawn from the necessities of the gospel, and consists in a piece of raillery, which, to be sure, is upon occasions of very great service, especially in a bad cause: "They," says he, speaking of those who extend the promises of Christ of working miracles beyond the period he assigns, "they ap"peal indeed to the text—where, though there is not the least hint of any particular time for which they (miracles) were to last, yet this they sup-

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" ply from their own imagination, and by the help " of a postulatum, which all people will grant, that they continued as long as they were necessary to the church, they presently extend that necessity " to what length they please, or as far as they " find it agreeable to the feveral fystems, which "they had previously entertained about them," Pref. to Inq. pages 11. and 12. To this ironical objection I find no direct reply made by fuch of the Doctor's adversaries as I have had occasion to see: I observe however upon it, that he here fairly grants that they are all guilty of what I laid to their charge above, to wit, of first adopting their particular fystems, and then seeking reasons to support them; we have feen before that this is the very case with the Doctor himself, and that therefore he and they are all at the bottom the same, and must stand or fall together. Hence we find that the very arguments they use against one another are with equal force retorted against themfelves. In the promises which our Saviour made cf miraculous powers to his disciples, as there is not the least hint for any particular time of their extension, so neither is there of their limitation; it may therefore be justly retorted on the Doctor in his own words as follows: "This timitation he supplies from his own imagination, and by the help of a of postulatum, which all people will grant, that es miracles continued as long as they were necessary so the church, and no longer, he presently limits es that

"that necessity to the apostolic age, as he found "that most agreeable to the system he had previous." ly entertained about them: "And from this it is plain, that the prevended necessity which they all appeal to is a mere note of wax, which is twisted about to any side these gentlemen please to turn it.

XXXV. His next argument is against the proof drawn from the heroic conduct of the martyrs, which he thinks may be eafily accounted for from * motives of enthufialm, a paffion for glory and reputation; from the veneration paid to the fufferers if they furvived the trial, the exalted happinels that awaited for them in heaven if they died under it, and the like. The improbability that fuch motives could produce the conduct we fee in the martyrs, is fully displayed by the writers against the Doctor; but the great argument against this objection is, that in the mouth of a heathen or of a Deift, it has equal force against the argument drawn from the fufferings of Christ himself, and the martyrdom of his apostles and others in the apostolic age, improof of a supermatural dispensation manifest. ed in them. "These considerations," says Mr Brook, " cannot be fupposed to have had any more " effect upon them (the martyrs after the apostles) " than they had upon St Peter and St Paul, and Vot M. ball trang a said and the fome ton trom the manual indicability of min-

Inquiry, page 332, et feqq.

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" fome of the rest of the apostles, who met with " the fame affectionate treatment from their dif-" ciples." And a little after he adds, "It is no more an argument that no extraordinary af-" fiftances were granted to the primitive martyrs, " because they had an assurance, not only of an " immortality of glory, but of extraordinary and distinguished rewards, and of a degree of happi-" ness proportionate to the degree of their suffering, than it is an argument that the spirit of God did not rest upon Jesus, and in him dwell " the fullness of the Godhead bodily, because he " endured the Crofs, despising the shame for the " glory that was fet before him : Or that no par-" ticular communications of God's holy spirit were vouchfafed to St Stephen, or no uncommon por-" tions of divine grace were bestowed upon St " Paul and the rest of the apostles, because in all "their tribulations they had respect unto the re-"compense of reward, and esteemed those light " afflictions, which were but for a moment, not " worthy to be compared with the glory that was " to be revealed," Brook's Exam. p. 42,-44. Consequently, as the Doctor's objection proves too much against himself, and against the Christian religion, which he professes, it is justly rejected as proving nothing at all, and made smell field Al old thren half were ounded

XXXVI. A third argument used by the Doctor is taken from the natural incredibility of miraculous

culous facts, which in answering the objection made against his fystem, as destructive to the credit of all history, he proposes as follows: " The history of " miracles is of a kind totally different from that " of common events; the one to be fuspected al-" ways of course, without the strongest evidence " to confirm it; the other to be admitted of " courfe, without as strong reason to suspect it. " Ordinary facts, related by a credible person, fur-" nish no cause of doubting from the nature of " the thing; but if they be strange and extraor-"dinary, doubts naturally arife; and in propor-"tion as they approach towards the marvellous, " those doubts still increase and grow stronger; " for mere honesty will not warrant them: We " require other qualities in the historian, " &c. Free Inquiry, p. 350. In answer to this argument, Mr Brook writes thus: " If the Free linguity had "been the production of an infidel writer, it would be nothing strange to find frequent de-" clarations in it, that all miracles are to be sufpect-" ed of course: That in all such extraordinary "events doubts naturally urife, and in proportion " as they approach towards the marvellous, those " doubts still increase and grow stronger; the con-" fequence of which declarations plainly appears " to be, that an higher degree of evidence is re-" quired in fuch cases, than any human testimony " is able to afford. But in a writer of Dr Mid-" dleton's character, who muit be supposed to be-" lieve

" lieve all the miracles of the gospel, and the won-" derful propagation of the Christian religion, it " is doubtless matter of great fu rprife to perceive " that there have any expressions dropped from this pen, which have the least tendency to such " an opinion, or that can bear any fuch confirme-"tion, or that may give any umbrage to a " fincere believer: Such a reflection upon the " history and evidence of miracles, will undermine the foundation of the gospel history," Examin. p. 42. The force of this answer confifts in this, that the miracles related in the fucceeding ages immediately after the apostles, are in themselves neither more extraordinary, nor more incredible, than those related in the gospel; the presumptive evidence for them is as strong in the one case as in the other; if therefore those of the two succeeding ages are to be rejected on account of their suppose fed incredibility, those of the apostolic age must, for the same reason, share the same fate; for tho the Doctor, as a Christian, may pretend to believe thefe last upon divine authority, yet a Heathen or a Deift will tell him that the divinity of the revelation depends upon the reality of the miraeles, which are the chief proofs of that revelation, and therefore to be believed prior to the revelation; and that confequently the Doctor's argument, from their natural incredibility, against the miracles of these after-ages, when used by a Heathen or a Deift.

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their elimits which which in ducting, XXXVII. From all that we have faid on the use made of the presumptive evidence for the continuation of miracles, I observe, 1. That as the Doctor and all his adversaries agree in allowing a just weight to this prefumptive evidence during the periods in which they use it, if an equal, or much fuperior and better founded prefumptive evidence. than any they have brought; can be shown for, the continuation of miracles after all their pretended periods, even down to the prefent times, or rather as long as the world shall endure, they cannot in reason, nay it would be ridiculous in them to refuse it. 2. The Doctor's adversaries justly reject his reafons against the presumptive evidence they bring for the continuation of miracles after the aposties, because they can be equally retorted against himself, and are plainly subversive of the very foundation of Christianity; but the reasons thefe gentlemen themselves bring against the continuation of miracles after the respective periods they affign, are either the very same, or of the fame nature as those brought by the Doctor, can be equally retorted against themselves, and are equally subversive of Christianity, as we shall see by and by; it follows, therefore, that all fuch their reasons can have no manner of weight at all against the continuation of miracles beyond the pestratem Dated to La Landay of riods.

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riods affigned by them, and that, for all they have faid, true miracles may have continued long enough after these assumed periods. This we shall, in due time, clearly show, and in the mean time proceed to consider what the Doctor and his opponents have said upon the positive testimony for the continuation of miracles.

XXXVIII. With regard to the Doctor, it is not eafy to know what his opinion is concerning the nature of the testimony necessary to prove the existence of a miracle: He tells us, as we have just now feen, that the history of miracles is of a kind totally different from that of common events—that mere honesty in those who attest them will not warrant them; we require other qualities in the hiftorian; a degree of knowledge, experience, and difcernment sufficient to judge of the whole nature and circumflances of the case; and if any of these be wanting, we necessarily suspend our belief, Inq. p. 251. From this one should naturally imagine, that where all these qualities were found, there, at leaft, we should have a just and convincing atteftation of the existence of a miracle. But by what follows he concludes, that it is impossible we should rationally give credit to miracles, even where all these qualities appeared in the one who attests them; for either this person who possesses these qualities, and attests the miracles, is a weak man, or a man of known abilities. "A weak man, indeed," fays the Doctor, " if honest, may attest « common

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4 common events as credible as the wifelt; yet 4 can hardly make any report that is gredible, of " flich as are miraculous; because a suspicion will " always occur, that his weakness and imperfect " knowledge of the extent of human art, had been imposed upon by the traft of cumning jugglers, "On the other hand, should a man of known abili-" ties and judgment relate to us things miracuac lous, or undertake to penform them himfelf, the wery notion of his skill, without an affirmance alof his integrity, would excite only the great e ter fulbicion of him, especially if he had any inserest to promote, or any favourite opinion to " recommend by the authority of fuch works; he-" cause a pretension to miracles has, in all ages " and nations, been found the most effectual instru-" ment of impostors, towards deluding the multi-" made and gaining their ends upon them," Free Ing. ihid. From this whole passage it evidently appears that, in the Doctor's opinion, it is impossible any human testimony should exist sufficient to convince us of the existence of miracles; the follies of which opinion we have feen above at large; and indeed, as Mr Brook justly observes, if the Doctor's reasoning in the above passage were true. it would undermine the foundation of the gaspel history, because it would have the same firength in the mouth of a Deift on Heathen against all the miracles related in the scripture, as it has against miracles in general as used by the Doctor; for the Heathen. mothing

Heathen or Deift would, with equal reason, say, either the facred writers, who relate thefe miracles, were weak men, or men of known abilities, and in either case, according to the Doctor's argumentation, no credit could be given to their testimony, especially as they certainly had most favourite opinions to recommend, and we can have no certain proof of their integrity but what is drawn from their own tellimony. However, that this is the Doctor's real fentiments, to wit, that no human testimony can found a fufficient credibility or proof for the exiftence of miracles, not only appears from the above passage, but also from what he says in his preface concerning the concurrent testimony of church his torians in all ages, for the continuation and exiftence of miracles; for there is not, fays he, a fingle point in all history fo constantly, explicitely, and unanimously affirmed by them all, as the continual succeffion of miracles, in every age down to the reformation, and it is farther deduced by persons of the most eminent character for their probity, learning, and dignity in the Roman church to this very day. Here the Doctor fairly acknowledges the concurrence of these essential qualifications which he requires, in those who attest miracles; men of the most eminent probity and learning, or, which is doubtless the same, of the most eminent honesty, integrity and knowledge; and yet the Doctor rejects their testimony, and would have us believe that all these men of fuch eminent characters in all ages, were nothing

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nothing but a fet of chafty knaves and filly fools. from whom nothing candid or impartial can be expected on this subject of miracles, whatever cres dit they deferve in other things which they relate. Whether this be reasoning like a reasonable perfon, I leave to the Doctor's admirers to demon-Avare. But as the argument used by him in the above citation, from this dilemma, that the persons attesting miracles are either weak or of known ahis lities, may deceive by the shew of reason it bears, I refer to what I have faid above, chap, xi. in examining the question, Whether eye-witnesses themfelves can have a comminging proof from their fenfes that the minacles they fee really exist? where it will appear that the Doctor's reasoning in the above citation is entirely founded on a most false supposition, to wit, that miracles are not plain facts, lying open to the testimony of the senses, of which the most simple clown is as capable to judge as the most learned philosopher; whereas the contrary of this is undoubtedly the case with the generality of miracles, especially such as are principally referred to as proofs of doctrines.

XXXIX. The Doctor's Protestant adversaries, then, justly condemn this his opinion as subversive, not only of the faith and credit of all history, but of the gospel itself, and therefore as altogether unworthy of a Christian, and utterly inexcusable in one who professes that name; and they lay down such

fuch qualifications and circumstances attending te-Rimony, as render it a most certain and unquestionable proof even of the existence of miracles, when it is accompanied by them. Some of their fentiments on this head we have feen above, chap. xi. when confidering the nature of the proof for the existence of miracles; but as Mr Brook is particularly explicit upon it, I shall here relate the substance of what he fays. First, he justly observes, that " the validity of an evidence given to a matter of fact, either viva voce, or in writing, is not determined by the particular opinions which " the witnesses may espouse in other matters, but by their knowledge of the things which they attell, and by their own integrity. In courts of civil judicature, where the nature of this evidence is best understood, and most fairly examined, the character of a witness, and the competency of his knowledge as to the particular " point under debate, is the only subject of inquiry, not his doctrines or perfualions. No diftinc-"tion is made between a member of the church " of England and a Sectarift; between a Romanist " and a Protestant; between a Deist and a Christian: If their knowledge and veracity is unquef-" tionable, the evidence of them all is admitted without exception. The same method is con-" ftantly purfued in all the dealings which men have with one another. The measures of credibility in historical facts are exactly of the same iccla " nature.

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"nature. The whimfical and extravagant doc-" trines of an historian, his strange and erroneous "opinions in matters of speculation, do not at all " affect the truth of his history, if his testimony " as a witness, that is, if his knowledge and ve-" racity be unexceptionable ;-and our want of " belief in this case is not occasioned by want of " evidence; but either by the force of fome ftrong " prejudices on the mind of the person to whom "the thing is related, or by the improbability of " the fact itself, which no human testimony is able " to support, Whatever evidence is fair and rea-" Sonable in common historical facts, will likewife " be fair and reafonable in facts of an extraordi-"nary and miraculous kind, if the nature and " circumstances are such as not to render them li-" able to any material objection; for in fuch a " case they are upon the same level with ordinary " events, and therefore can require no higher de-" gree of evidence." Brook's Examin. chap: iv.

Secondly, He lays down the circumstances required in testimony, in order to render the evidence for miracles arising from it above all exception; which are, 1. When there is the concurrent testimony of various writers of different principles and persuasions, who lived in the very times when these sacks happened, and were themselves evewitnesses of them. Nothing, indeed, but the force of truth, and the reality of the things themselves,

is able to create fo unanimous, so universal a confent, 2. This becomes still stronger, when it is confirmed by the testimony even of enemies themfelves, and is contradicted by none. 12. When fuch testimony is given, and published to the world in the face of the most virulent enemies, at a time when the truth of the facts attested might easily have been disproved, and a detection of the leaft fraud or fiction would most effectually have ruined the credit and authority of the witnesses, have heightened the malice and calumny of their adverfaries, and have proved the eternal opprobrium of their party. 4. All which is full more strongly corroborated, when those who give the testimony profess it to be a firm tenet of their belief, that every lie is criminal in the fight of God, and that he will not fail to punish those who speak untruths, even though for the advancement of a good cause.

XL. From these principles, Mr Brook, with great reason, vindicates the miracles of the three first ages; because all the above circumstances concur in the testimony given by the fathers of these ages, for the existence of miracles in their days; whereas the exceptions made by Dr Middleton against their testimony, are only taken from their particular opinions in speculative points, their mistakes in interpreting some parts of scripture, their errors in the enymologies of language, their being mistaken about the authenticity of some books, and

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and fuch like failings, which the Doctor imagines he finds them guilty of, and from which he concludes they were all knaves or fools; and that their tellimony for the existence of miracles, which fell under their own fenses, is absolutely unworthy of all credit, even though attended with all the above circumstances. This childish conclusion is justly exploded by Mr Brook, and the Doctor's other Protestant adversaries; and indeed we are furprised to see such an argument published to the world by one of Dr Middleton's parts and penetration: But what could he do? he was convinced by the force of truth, that the testimony for the continuation of miracles in every fucceeding age, down to the present times, was equally strong, and equally attended by every corroborating circumstance, with those of the ages immediately succeeding the apostles; and therefore, if human testimony was allowed to be a fufficient proof of the miracles in the primitive ages, it could never be refused as an equal proof of those in all succeeding ages, which would be giving up the cause at once in favours of Popery; he was therefore under a necesfity of finding out some kind of arguments for rejecting the testimony of all ages, and was forced to take up with the above, because the badness of his cause could afford no better. These, indeed, he fets off in the most specious manner, and gilds them over in the most persuasive dress, by all the force of his eloquence, in order to hide their VOL. H. deformity,

deformity, and impose upon his unwary readers but these were by no means the reasons that perfuaded himfelf: he had already embraced his opinion before he had invented these reasons; and the true ground of his fentiments was what he himself expresses in these words: " If the cause " must be determined by the unanimous confent " of fathers, we shall find as much reason to be-" lieve these miraculous powers were continued " even to the latest ages, as to any other, how " early and primitive foever after the days of the "apostles," Pref. p. xiv. and therefore, "by " granting them (the Romanists) but a single age " of miracles after the times of the apostles, we " shall be entangled in a series of difficulties whence " we can never fairly extricate ourselves, till we " allow the same powers also to the present age." Introd. p. lxxxii.

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XLI. We must now take a short review of what we have seen of the principles and proceedings of the Doctor and his adversaries. The principles in which they all agree, at least in appearance, and upon which they all proceed, are these: "Christi-" anity must be desended; Popery must be con-"demned; whatever is necessary for the desence of Christianity must be admitted; whatever tends to establish Popery must be rejected." The Doctor thinks Christianity will be sufficiently desended, if the apostolical miracles be admitted as founded on divine testimony, but that Popery must

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must be established, if miracles be admitted in any one age after the apossles on the credit of human testimony: In consequence of this he rejects all the miracles recorded after the apostolic age, and in pretty plain terms declares (as we have seen above), as his reason for doing so, that miracles are of such a peculiar nature, that no human testimony can render them credible; or in other terms, that their innate incredibility is such as cannot be overcome by human testimony.

Mr Breok is of opinion, that Christianity cannot fland, if the miracles of the three first ages be rejected, which therefore must of necessity be defended; but that Popery would infallibly be established if the miracles of the succeeding ages were admitted, which therefore must be disproved. He of course rejects the Doctor's system with respect to the three first ages, for these reasons, because it would destroy the credit of history, and undermine the gospel: and he rejects his argument from the incredibility of miracles, because, in the mouth of a Heathen or a Deift, it would with equal: ftrength condemn the miracles of the fcripture itfelf. He therefore holds, that miracles, as fuch. are as capable of proof from human testimony as any other natural events, except they be of fuch an incredible nature, either in themselves, or in their circumstances, as no human testimony can support. He afferts, that the miracles of the three first

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ages were by no means of this incredible nature; and therefore, that their existence is fully evident. from the testimony of the fathers of these ages. which testimony is attended with every circumstance that can render it incontestible. But as he is of opinion, that Popery would be established if miracles were allowed after the third age, he therefore endeavours to show, that the miracles of the after-ages were all of this incredible nature, either in themselves, or in their circumstances, and therefore not to be believed upon any human testimony whatever. Those who carry on the continuation of miracles to the end of the fourth century, act in the felf-fame manner: They fee no fuch incredibility in the miracles of the fourth age, as appeared to Mr Brook, which could not with equal reason be alledged of those of the former three; and it is plain to them, that the human testimony by which they are supported is, in every respect, equivalent to that on which Mr Brook admits those of the three first ages, which, therefore, they affirm, cannot be rejected, without falling into the fame shocking confequences which he so justly imputes to Dr Middleton's system; and thus they admit the miracles of the fourth age upon the felf-fame principles, and for the fame reasons on which Mr Brook admits those of the preceeding ages. But as it does not fuit their notions to allow of miracles after the fourth century, they therefore reject those of the fifth and succeeding ages,

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ages, for the very reasons for which Mr Brook rejects those of the fourth, and which they so loudly condemn in him. Those who allow the continuation of miracles to the end of the fifth or fixth centuries, proceed exactly in the fame way, both in admitting them to those periods which best suit their fancies, and in rejecting them entirely after that time; all which clearly shows how inconfistent they are among themselves, and how incapable their arguments for the pretended cellation of miracles at any of their assumed periods, are of giving any folid fatisfaction. It therefore remains to be flown, that the same arguments which they use to prove a continuation of miracles to the æras affigned by each of these systems, have equal strength to prove that continuation down to this prefent day; and that the pretended incredibility of the miracles in after-ages is as groundless in itself, and as insufficient to invalidate the force of the testimony for them, as it is against those of any of the first ages, or even against those of the fcripture itself. ed by complete his and something two

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naistable successful the amount of this below were not y I. THE force of human testimony, when the witnesses who bear it have a thorough knowledge of the facts they relate, and are people of known integrity, or at least of whose probity there are no reasonable grounds of doubt, is so perfualive, that a perfon would be accounted a fool who should feriously call it in question; and if this testimony be attended with some or all of those corroborating circumstances which were mentioned from Mr Brook in the preceeding chapter, it gives as full and convincing an evidence of the facts fo attested, as we have in other sciences from the strictest demonstration proper to them. is a truth confessed by the most inveterate adversaries of miracles, in every other concern of life where it has place, and, as we have feen above, is allowed even in proof of miracles by all the Protestant adversaries of Doctor Middleton's syftem,

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stem, to be as thorough and convincing an evidence as a reasonable man can demand, or the nature of the things will admit. But as these gentle. men were well aware that the most perfect tellimony can be produced for the continuation of miracles in every age to the present times in the Roman Catholic Church, and that forothe most part it is also attended with all or most of the corroborating circumflances above-mentioned, they therefore found themselves under the indispensible neceffity, for the support of their cause, of finding out some restraining argument wherewith to diminish the force of such testimony when it made against them, and shew why the miracles said to have happened after their assumed periods, should not be believed, even though attested by the most perfect human testimony. The argument they have fallen upon for this purpose has indeed a very formidable appearance, and may feem at first fight to be altogether unanswerable: It is no less than the natural incredibility of the facts attested ; and what possible force of human testimony can perfuade us of a thing which is in itself incredible? "The present question," says Dr Middleton, " concerning the miraculous powers of the primi-" tive church, depends on the joint credibility of the " facts pretended to have been produced by thefe " powers,' and of the witnesses who attest them. " If either part be infirm, their credit must fink " in proportion; and, if the facts especially be " incredible, melicier.

"incredible, must of course fall to the ground; " because no force of testimony can alter the na-"ture of things." Pref. p. x. Mr Brook readily agrees to this affertion, adopts it as a first principle in the prefent question, and, whilst he admits and defends the invincible force of testimony in commanding our affent even to miracles, he makes this the only exception: "Our belief." fays he, " of past matters of fact, whether ordi-" nary or extraordinary, against which there lies " no reasonable exception from the nature of " things, refts entirely upon testimony." And a little after, "Whatever evidence," fays he, "is " fair and reafonable in common historical facts. will likewife be fair and reasonable in facts of an extraordinary and miraculous kind, if the na-" ture and circumstances of these facts are such " as not to render them liable to any material obes jection." Brook's examin. chap, iv. It is upon this ground, as we have feen above, that Dr Middleton rejects all miracles whatever that rest only upon human testimony, and admits of none but fuch as are contained in the word of God; and it is upon this ground precifely that all the Doctor's adverfaries reject all miracles recorded to have happened after the respective æras they are pleased to affign for the duration of miracles in the church : and their whole reasoning upon this question is reduced to these two points, that the miracles recorded before the time affigned by them for their ceffation.

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cellation, were by no means incredible or improbable; and this they endeavour to shew against Dr Middleton in defence of Christianity; but that all miracles faid to have happened after the period they affign for their ceffation were absolutely incredible, and therefore not to be believed, however supported by any human testimony; and this they maintain against the Roman Catholics. Mr Brook is particularly earnest in displaying this argument. and has gathered together all that can be faid in defence of it. It is therefore necessary that we examine him attentively, in order to fee what is the real worth and value of this boasted argument, upon which, I may fay, the iffue of this important question of the duration or cessation of miracles in the Christian church, in a great measure depends. For if it be found to be sterling coin, and that the miracles of after-ages are absolutely incredible, the Roman Catholic must give up the cause, and yield the victory to his adversaries; but if this mighty Achilles be found to be weak like a child, and abfolutely inconsistent both with common sense and with Christianity, then the perpetual duration of the miraculous powers in the Catholic church will shine forth in all its lustre, and the testimony on which it is supported must command our ready acquiefcence to its authority.

II. The first thing then that appears in this argument taken from the incredibility of the facts attested

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tefted, is, that it proceeds upon a supposition which is contradicted by common fenfe, and is itself a manifest absurdity. The precise point in question here is this, "Whether or not a fact absolutely incredible in itself can possibly be believed, when attested by witnesses who are acknowledged to · be competent judges of the truth, and people of known probity and integrity; and when their testimony is attended with these corroborating · circumstances which carry with them the highest conviction?" Dr Middleton readily answers, that the credit of fuch a fact, however attefted, must fall to the ground, for this plain reason, Because no force of testimony can alter the nature of things; in which reason he evidently shows, that by the incredibility of a fact, he understands its impossibi-Bity; and indeed common fense shows, that in all this question incredible and impossible are fynonimous terms; for if the fact fully attefted, as above, be a possible fact, then it would be ridiculous to fay it was incredible; you may call it amazing, furprising, aftonishing, extraordinary, or what you please, but you can never call it incredible; for no fact, possible in itself, can be incredible, when its existence is actually proved by the fullest evidence the nature of the thing can bear, and is fupposed to be the work of omnipotence; if the fact be possible, such evidence for its existence commands our affent, and renders it fully credible. Let us then propose the question again, and substitute impossible Leiler

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impossible in place of intredible, and fee how it abpears in the eyes of common sense; it will run thus: "Whether or not a fact absolutely impossible in itself can possibly be believed, when attested by witnesses who are acknowledged to be competent judges of the truth, and people of known probity and integrity, and when their testimony is attended with those corroborating circumstances, which carry with them the highest conviction?" What answer would common sense give to this question? Doubtless it would laugh at fuch a question, and, without hesitation, deny the fuppolition as being itself a mere chimera, an abfolute impossibility; for how could fuch a cafe ever possibly exist? how could an absolute falsehood ever procure fuch a testimony? how is it possible that men of known probity and integrity should eever combine to attest as a truth, and, consistent with their own knowledge, a fact which is absolutely impossible in itself, and therefore absolutely false? how is it it possible they should do so in the face of the world, in the midst of their enemies, without having their folly exposed, and themselves rendered contemptible? This would doubtless be the language of common fense on the above question; and with reason; for the testimony above described is a certain and undoubted effect produced, and actually existing; this effect must have had an adequate cause producing it; it is plain to common fense, that this cause could be no other than

than the actual existence of the fact so attested; for it is evidently impossible that such a testimony should be given to a falfehood; confequently if the fact itself be supposed to be incredible, and therefore impossible, to suppose it supported by such a testimony, is itself a mere chimæra, an absurd and ridiculous supposition. The confequence of all which is, that wherever any fact, however uncommon or miraculous it may appear, is in reality attested by fuch a testimony as above described, it is ridiculous and unworthy a philosopher to pretend to reject fuch tellimony from any supposed incredibility in the fact fo attested: A fact in itself impossible, and therefore no fact at all, can never possibly be supported by such a testimony; and a possible fact, when so attested, is by that very testimony rendered perfectly credible and worthy of belief. Hence then the only rational conduct in all cases of this kind is to examine diligently the testimony itself, both as to the knowledge and veracity of the evidences; if any flaw be found there, then indeed the credit of what they attest falls to the ground, whether the fact be supposed credible or incredible; but if the testimony stands its ground; if the witnesses were competent judges of what they narrate; if they attest it as consisting with their own knowledge, and in circumstances in which they must have been detected had what they faid been false; and if they be people of known probity and integrity; if, I fay, the testimony upon the

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the strictest examination be found to be of this kind, then if we hear the voice of reason, and our minds be not warped from the truth by passion or prejudice, it will be impossible for us not to give our assent to the fact so attested.

III. But in order to refute this unphilosophical argument on all hands, let us suppose the possibility of the case proposed; let us suppose that a fact absolutely impossible in itself, and therefore absolutely false, should ever be attested by an evidence of human testimony, such as we have above described, what would be the consequences? why, truly the very same consequences would follow, for which all Dr Middleton's Protestant adversaries cry out so much against his system, and so loudly condemn it; namely, all faith in history would be destroyed, the credit of the gospel undermined, and an universal scepticism introduced. For upon what is our belief of past or absent facts grounded? Surely upon the credit of human testimony, and because the constitution of our nature is such, that when fuch testimony is of the nature above-defcribed, and attended with the corroborating circumstances there mentioned, we are powerfully determined to believe it from the interior conviction. that fuch testimony in such circumstances cannot deceive us. But if we once suppose it possible (as in the case above-narrated) that a testimony of this kind, even attended with all its corroborating cir-Vol. II. cumstances,

cumstance, may, in any one case, be given to an absolute salsehood, then it may be given to another also, and if so, to all; consequently we can be certain of it in no case, and that determination which we feel in our nature to believe upon proper testimony, is a false principle, upon which we cannot with fafety depend. What a multitude of false and fatal consequences would follow in particular cases, if this were so! how false then the Supposition which would produce them! and let it not be faid here, that human testimony may fafely be trusted in ordinary events, and is only to be rejected when the incredibility of the facts attefted oblige us to do fo. For, if we thus suppose it possible for a fact absolutely incredible, and therefore absolutely false, to be attended with such a testimony, as above described, surely an ordinary event no-way, incredible in itself, may much more eafily procure such a testimony for its existence, even though it be a real falfehood; it is much more likely, for example, that men should invent and attest as a truth any ordinary or common event, against which there lies no fuspicion from the thing itself, than a fact naturally incredible, which must of course render their testimony fuspected, and more expose them to the shame of being detected: Consequently, if we suppose it posfible that the fullest testimony should ever be given to a thing in itself impossible, and upon that account false, much more possible will it be for such a testimony

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mony to be given to a falsehood in any ordinary event, which in itfelf contains no impossibility; and fuch a possibility of falsehood attending the fullest testimony, must, of course, render precarious all fuch testimony, and hinder us from being thoroughly perfuaded of any thing whatfoever founded upon it. And if so, what becomes of all history? what becomes of the gospel? what becomes of Christianity? And, in reality, will not this very argument against miracles, in any age, from their natural incredibility, or, in other words, impossibility, if it has any force at all, militate equally in the mouth of a Deift or Heathen against those of the whole scripture? Nay, is not this the very argument used by these gentlemen against scripture miracles? and are not all the answers given to it by the defenders of the scripture founded upon this very supposition, that it is impossible a full and perfect testimony, attended with all its corroborating circumstances, should ever be given to an absolute falsehood, much less to any fact in itself impossible? See here then how Mr Brook, and all others who pretend to limit the duration of miracles in the church of Christ, to any of their affumed periods, are obliged to use such arguments for that end as are evidently productive of all those fatal consequences for which they so loudly condemn Dr Middleton's argument, which, if true, are subversive of all history, and of the gospel itself, and which in the mouth of a Heathen serve

as strongly against all scripture miracles as against any others; but arguments at the same time which will never do any harm against any of these things, because, when duly considered, are sound destitute of common sense, and proceed upon a supposition which is manifestly salse and chimerical.

IV. Against what has been said on this matter, two objections will perhaps be offered with Dr Middleton from experience, See his Inquiry, p. 351. and the following: First, "There is not," fays he, "a fingle historian of antiquity, whether Greek or Latin, who has not recorded oracles, prodigies, prophecies and miracles-many of these are attested in the gravest manner, and by the gravest writers, and were firmly believed at the time by the populace; yet it is certain, that there is not one of them which we can reasonably take to be genuine; not one, but what was either wholly forged, or improved and aggravated into ' fomething supernatural. Secondly, The case of witchcraft, fays he, affords the most effectual proof of what I am advancing. There is not in all history any one miraculous fact fo authentically ' attested as the existence of witches. All Christian nations whatfoever have confented in the belief of them, and provided capital laws against them-Now to deny the reality of facts fo folemnly attested, and so universally believed, feems to give the lie to the fense and expe-' rience

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perience of all Christendom-yet the incredibility of the thing prevailed, and was found at last too strong for all this force of human testimo-'ny: So that the belief of witches is now utterly extinct and quietly buried." Here, will it perhaps be faid, we have two examples from experience, where the fullest human testimony was given to facts utterly incredible, and which of courfe were afterwards found to be absolutely false. Therefore, as what has actually happened is certainly possible, and may happen again, it is far from being abfurd or chimerical to suppose, that facts abfolutely incredible may yet be attended by the fulleft human testimony; and when that is the case; the incredibility of the fact must invalidate all the force of the tellimony, however strong in itself, and however fupported.

V. The proper answer to this objection is by examining the two cases proposed, to see if they really be to the purpose or not. With regard to the first, taken from the prodigies, oracles, and miracles among the Heathens, to proceed with the necessary clearness, we must distinguish the fact said to have happened from the nature and causes of it, and this distinction we have already, and shall afterwards again have occasion to make with regard to all miracles. The fact itself is, properly speaking, the only object of the senses, and consequently of the human testimony; the nature and causes of

it, that is, whether it be natural or miraculous, whether from natural causes or supernatural; this, I fay, is a fubject which properly belongs to the judgment to investigate and determine. Sometimes even this will appear at first sight, at other times it will require attentive examination, in which the rules of the criterion serve to guide and direct us. Now as to the facts themselves referred to in the first case above proposed, I ask this question, Were any of them in reality attested by such human testimony as we are here speaking of? are they related by authors of known integrity, who were either eye witnesses of these facts themselves, or had the full opportunity, and had used it, of being fully afcertained as to the truth of them? If they be indeed attended by fuch an evidence as this, I believe every reasonable man will allow with me that they were undoubtedly true, and had a real existence in the manner in which they are thus attested; as to their nature and causes, whatever the witnesses of the facts may have said of these, is only their opinion, but not their testimony. But if, on the other hand, these facts have never been attested in the manner above described; if they be only related as hearfays and popular reports, or, though gravely related, and even believed by the grave historian himself, yet if it be manifest that he believes them not from his own personal knowledge, nor even from a full examination into their truth, but only as carried away by the common current,

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question, and nothing at all to the purpose; and all the reasoning of the Doctor upon it is only beating the air in vain. But, says he, these facts, though fully believed, are now found to be false: True; but how is their falsehood discovered? not from their incredibility, whilst the testimony by which they are supported is allowed to be good; by no means; but solely by showing the insufficiency and weakness of the testimony.

VI. We come now to the other example taken from the belief of witches; and here it is really amazing to see how far the Doctor, who professes himself a Christian, and expresses so high a veneration for the Bible, should forget himself. ing to the way he represents this case, the existence of witches is a thing absolutely incredible, and the belief of them is now-a-days utterly extinct; and yet we find their existence attested again and again by the very word of God itself; we find most fevere laws made even there against them; we find all recourse to them for help of any kind severely condemned and utterly forbid; nay, we find in the New Testament, that the portion of forcerers in the next world, shall be a lake of burning fire and brimstone, which is the second death . Can it then be true, what the Doctor fo confidently afferts, that the belief of witches, though thus attested by God himfelf,

See above, Chap. IJ. where this is treated at large.

himself, is absolutely incredible, and that it is at present utterly extinct in the world? If so, what becomes of the Christian religion? for if the testimony of God himself proves salse with regard to the existence of witches, it may also be salse (impicous supposition from whence such a conclusion slows!) with regard to the incomprehensible mysteries and miracles of the gospel; nay, this is what Deists and Heathens absolutely affirm. Did Dr Middleton reslection what his Bible contains, when he made this objection? I scarce think he did, or at least for his own honour, though he had no regard to God's, he never would have made it.

VII. From what I have here faid it is evident, that the boafted objection against the existence of miracles, taken from their supposed incredibility, if a mere fophism, proceeding upon a supposition not only falfe, but impossible; for if the fact attested be possible, and the testimony unexceptionable, such attestation renders it perfectly credible: and if the fact be impossible, it is no less impossible that it should be attested by an unexceptionable testimony; for it is impossible the existence of a fact should be consistent with the knowledge of the witnesses, if the fact had no existence at all, nay, could possibly have none; neither is it to be supposed that men in their wits would combine to give out and attest, as a thing consistent with their own knowledge, what they not only knew to be tiebratin a bili mader Pagado prode falfe,

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false, but what they knew to be an impossibility, as this very circumstance must immediately expose them to detection, and to the utmost shame and infamy.

VIII. Here then we might justly rest this argument; for as the only reason brought against the existence of the miracles of after-ages, though fully attested, is their supposed incredibility, if this falls to the ground, as we have feen it does, it follows that no just exception can be made against these miracles; and therefore, that, when sufficiently attested, they are undoubtedly to be admitted. But as great stress is laid upon this argument, and feveral different branches of incredibility are difplayed in support of it, I shall go on to consider each of them in particular, as I find them in Mr Brook, and shew the weakness and infusficiency of all he fays on the fubject. First, however, it will be necessary to see if we can find out what these gentlemen themselves mean by incredibility, and what is the precise idea which they affix to this word. I do not find that any of them gives a proper definition of it at all; and from what they fay about it in their writings, it would feem as if they were not agreed about its meaning among themfelves; nay, there is even reason to think that it is used in different senses by the same person, according as fuits best his prefent purpose.

IX. To begin with Dr Middleton: In the citation from the Free Inquiry related above, chap. sei. 6. 38. from the conditions which he there requires in testimony to prove the existence of any miraculous fact, and sufficient to over-rule the incredibility naturally inherent in every miracle as fuch, it would appear to be his opinion, that this incredibility is a real thing, rising from just causes, and natural to every miracle whatfoever. But in his remarks on the Observator, p. 40. he changes his opinion entirely, and looks upon this incredibility of miracles not as any thing real and naturally inherent in them, but as a mere ideal appearance, as feated only in our imagination; for the Observafor having alledged that these miracles which are not incredible in themselves, ought always to be admitted when fufficiently attefted, and those only to be rejected which are in themselves incredible, the Doctor replies, "To fay that, where " the facts themselves are incredible, such mira-" cles are to be rejected, is to beg the question " and not to prove it; a too precarious way of " reasoning! because what is incredible to me may " feem credible to another." Here then, according to the Doctor, the credibility or incredibility of a miracle is just as we fancy it to be; and is this a reasonable ground to over-rule the utmost force of human tellimony?

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X. Mr Brook, who treats this subject more at large in the first chapter of his examination, speaks ing of the prefumptive evidence for the miracles of the first three centuries, expresses himself thus: "What may with great plaulibility of reason be " urged against the miracles of the fourth and " fifth centuries, can here have no place. There " is no ridiculoufness or incredibility in the mira-" cles themselves, which are faid to have been " wrought. There is no impertinence, abfurdity, or impiety in the ends for which they are suppo-" fed to have been performed, to shock the faith " of a true Christian, or to raise any suspicion of "the miraculousness of these facts: There is no " apparent reason against our belief of miracles " in those days: There is a strong presumption " of their truth and reality: The miraculousness of those events which are recorded by the pri-" mitive writers of the church, is no objection " to the credibility of them. We can discover " manifestly the propriety and necessity of divine " interpolitions from the circumstances of those "times; and where fuch a propriety and necessi-"ty appears, there no Christian can have any " reasonable objection to the belief of them; for " every Christian, from the nature of his profes-" fion, must be supposed to think, that the work-" ing of miracles is no ways inconsistent with the idea of that God whom he ferveth." In thefe words, which are an abridgement of what he difplays

plays at large throughout the whole of his fixth chapter, against the continuance of miracles after the third century, we find huddled together all that can well be said about the incredibility of any miracle: From this then I shall endeavour to put the true meaning of this vaunted word into some kind of orderly point of view, that we may be enabled to form some distinct idea of it, and not bewilder our judgment by a consusion of words; and by this means we shall the better perceive what weight it ought to have in the present argument.

de noise of the time of the same and the same of the XI. A miracle is then incredible when, for folid reasons, it cannot possibly gain belief from a reasonable person. This incredibility may be conceived to arise from two causes, either from the fact itself faid to have been performed, or from the circumstances in which it is faid to have been done. The uncommonness of the fact itself, its amazing greatness, its miraculousness, however stupenduous it be, can never render it incredible in itself, except it involve a contradiction, and be absolutely imposfible; because, where Omnipotence is allowed to be the agent, nothing that is possible can be in itfelf incredible, as is plain to common fense. The incredibility, then, of the fact in itself, is the selffame thing with its impossibility. Again, the incredibility of any possible fact will arise from its circumstances, when they are such as render it unworthy

worthy of Almighty God, or contrary to his divine perfections to perform it in fuch circumstances. This may be called a moral incredibility, as the former may be called a physical one; and thefe two kinds of incredibility comprehend the full idea affixed by Mr Brook to this word, in all he fays in the above citation. The circumstances there supposed by Mr Brook to render a fact incredible which is in itself possible, are various and of different kinds. Some of the most remarkable we have fully examined already, when treating on the Ends and Instruments of Miracles, and have shown how little weight all that is faid upon these heads against miracles can have with any reasonable person. I shall here examine the rest, and the particular application of them made by Mr Brook, and shall expose their weakness and fatal confequences, if allowed to have any folid weight in this matter.

First, he observes, that there were manisest reasons of necessity and expediency for the good of the church, which made it becoming Almighty God to work many miracles in the three first ages, but that all these ceased at least from the days of Chrysostom: "Now, as the concurrence of Providence," says he, "is never wanting upon important and necessary occasions, so it is never exerticised in a superfluous and impertinent manner;" and therefore this change of circumstances in the Vol. II.

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needs of the church, gives all reason to believe that miracles were then withdrawn. In answer to this I observe, that all these reasons of necesfity and expediency, displayed by Mr Brook at large in his chapter on the prefumptive evidence for the miracles of the first three ages, are reduced to this one: "The propagation of Christianity at the beginning required the help of miracles;" from which he argues thus: "When Christianity was propagated and established, it required them ' no longer; therefore they were then withdrawn." Here it is supposed, "that Christianity stood in need of miracles only for its propagation among the Heathens;" and, "that this need of Chriflianity is the only reason worthy of God for which to work miracles:" The last of these we have feen above to be a manifest falsehood, when speaking on the ends of miracles; the former we shall afterwards see to be equally against truth, when we come to consider the presumptive reasons for the continuation of miracles; and confequently this reason for the incredibility of the miracles of after-ages is good for nothing. Besides, this argument in the mouth of a Heathen or Deist, will equally prove, that there were no miracles wrought among the people of God in the old law after their full establishment in the land of promise; for whatever reasons of necessity or expediency might be alledged as presumptive proofs for the miracles wrought by God in establishing that religion,

gion, all these entirely ceased when it was in fact fully established; and therefore, according to this argument, all miracles after that period become utterly incredible, for Providence never concurs in a superfluous and impertinent manner!

XII. His fecond reason against the credibility of the miracles of the after-ages is taken from their number : The number of the miracles, fayshe, pretended to have been wrought in the fourth and fifth centuries, is itself another just exception to the truth and credibility of them. This feems an odd kind of argument; however, he adds his reasons: "It may ' reasonably be presumed," says he, " that as the benefit of miraculous powers began to be lefs and less wanted in proportion to the increase and power of the Christians, fo the use and exercise of them began gradually to decline; at least it cannot, I think, fairly be imagined, that as the real exigencies of the church were continually leffening, miracles should become still ' more and more numerous; yet in fact we find, ' if the writers of these ages deserve any credit, that the power of working miracles was more extensive and universal in the time of Chryso-' from and afterwards, than in the days of the apostles themselves—Nor was the benefit of these ' miracles confined to focieties of men only; it extended itself even to the caves and dens of beafts; the wonder-workers of those days-re-M 2 tired

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' tired from the company and converse of their fellow-creatures, fixed their abodes in mountainous and defert places, and made the brute creation fensible of the extraordinary power and ' presence of the Almighty." Brook's Examin. P. 302. &c.

XIII. If what is here faid were divested of its declamatory ftile, and reduced to a proper form of argument, it would not be easy to show any connection between its premisses and the confequences drawn from them; but letting that pass, I observe on this passage, 1mo, That it proceeds upon the fame falle simposition as the former argument did, viz. That the propagation of the Christian religion is the only end worthy of God for which to work miracles; for though the increase and power of the Christians made it less necessary to work miracles for promoting that increase and power, yet, if there be numbers of other ends worthy of miracles, as we have feen there certainly are; if there be numbers of other exigencies which require the help of miracles besides the propagation of religion, as is in fact the cafe, then all the above flourish of an argument falls to the ground at once, being deprived of its support and foundation. 2do, Whether all the miracles related by the writers of these ages be true or false, is nothing to the purpose, and quite out of the question: Nobody ever pretends to defend all and every one of

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them; many of them may have been perfectly true, although there has not been handed down to us a full and unexceptionable testimony of their being fo: All these then, however numerous, are given up at once: We have to do only with those, for the truth and reality of which a full and unexceptionable testimony can be produced. Now, what a ridiculous way of arguing is it to fay, There are great numbers of miracles related to have been performed in the fourth and fifth and following ages, for the truth of which we have not at present a full and proper evidence; therefore all those in these ages for which we have the most undoubted testimony of the gravest authors, and eye-witnesses of them, are to be rejected as false and counterfeit! and yet this is the full force of the argument, if it has any at all. atio, It is a downright falsehood to affert, that, according to the writers of these ages, miracles became more extensive and more numerous after the days of Chry softom, than in the days of the apostles. In the days of the apostles, and during the first three ages, the charifmatic graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost were poured out on all the faithful, and the visible effects of his divine presence and assistance were performed, in speak. ing with tongues and prophefying, and other miraculous operations almost in every Christian. Mr Brook himself has proved at large in his chapter on the persons endowed with miraculous powers: and, to confirm what he fays, cites Mr Dodwell

as follows: "Were we to run through all the tefilmonies above cited from Justin Martyr, Irenæs us, &c. we should find that they speak of the whole body of Christians, great as well as small, as endued with thefe gifts on any figual occafion; but they infift particularly on the perfor-' mance of them by those who had the least natural endowments, as the mighty hand of God was most visible when it displayed itself by the ' meanest instruments," &c. Now it is certain, that this extension and universality of these gifts was withdrawn long before the days of Chryfostom, and that they were bestowed in a less conspicuous manner, only upon those holy persons who, sequestrating themselves from the corruptions of the world, studied only to render their fouls acceptable to their great Creator, and were thereby disposed for receiving thefe fupernatural powers and graces. The real case is this, after the conversion of the Roman emperors, the number of learned Christian writers became vaftly greater than in the former ages, and their writings have been preferved in greater abundance down to these our days. In these writings many more particular miracles have been recorded than in the writings of the three first ages; because both the number of writers, the quantity of their writings, and the variety of their subjects, were much greater; but had all the particular miracles of the three first ages been committed to writing, there certainly would have been no comparison;

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parison; so that our author here departs from the truth in the representation he has given us of the case, and consequently all his witticisms upon this occasion only serve the more to condemn him. 4to, The same way of arguing, in the mouth of a Deift and Heathen, will equally ferve to prove that the numerous miracles wrought by Elijah and Elisha. fome of which were even performed in the defarts among the beafts, were all fictitious: Put Jews instead of Christians, the exigencies of the synagogue for those of the church; the times of Elijah and Elisha for the days of Chrysoftom, and all the above cited argument of Mr Brook's against the miracles of the fourth and fifth ages, will equally ferve the purpose of a Heathen and a Deift against those performed by these two great prophets; nay, will have just the fame force, if displayed by the pen of a Middleton, against those of the three first centuries, for which Mr Brook so strenuously contends; and confequently, in proving by far too much, proves in fact nothing at all.

XIV. His third argument against the credibility of the miracles related in the fourth and fifth ages, is of a very singular nature, and composed of the grossest misrepresentation and sophistry. In the fourth century arose the Arian heresy, one of the most dangerous that ever attacked the Christian religion; it consisted in denying the divinity of Jesus Christ, and giving him out for a mere creature.

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The abettors of this pestiferous doctrine were very numerous, and of the highest authority and power both in church and state, and they spared no pains, stuck at no crimes to promote the interest of their faction, and used every base and ungenerous art to calumniate and perfecute the Catholics. The Catholics, on the other hand, were not wanting to stand in the gap, and to oppose, to the utmost of their power, this torrent of impiety that was pouring in upon the church; their zealous paftors, both by words and writings, and other apoftolical labours, endeavoured to confirm the faithful, to confute impiety, and defend the honour of their Lord and Master; yea, many of them, as well as of their people, fuffered persecutions, imprisonment, banishment, and even martyrdom itself, in testimony of the divinity of Jesus. Certainly if ever the exigencies of the church required the protection of miracles for the attestation of the truth, the comfort of her children, and the confirmation of the faithful, they required it at this time, when all the force of the Roman emperors, the most horrid calumnies, and the deepest politics were often employed to undermine the very foundation of her faith, by a more dangerous attack than had perhaps ever been made against it by the Heathens. Accordingly we find many remarkable miracles performed at this time in defence of the Catholic faith, and by feverals of the orthodox pastors: These are attested by men of the greatest character for their fanctity and

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and integrity, and who were themselves eye-witneffes of them; they were performed not in secret places, and related afterwards to the world, but in public, before multitudes of people in the face of the world, in presence of the very Arians themfelves, who wanted neither will nor abilities to difcover the fraud or imposture, if any fuch had been; their effects were to confound the Arians, to ftop their fury, and often even to convert them; certainly a more ample proof both of presumptive evidence and politive testimony cannot be produced for any miracle in any preceeding age than for those performed upon this occasion; and yet, according to Mr Brook's logic, they were all impostures and forgeries. To prove this point, he represents the zeal and fervour of the orthodox pastors in defence of the divinity of Jesus Christ, as merely the effect of pride and ambition, and as much fo at least as the conduct of the Arians was; and then, "During this long contest," fays he, "which was ' managed with all the animofity and fury that the most bigotted and inflamed zeal could produce; when each party feemed more folicitous ' about their own power and authority than about the doctrines they espoused; when the whole ftruggle between them was more for conquest ' and dignity than for the fake of truth itself; it is highly probable, that in many cases where private arguments and public decrees had not the defired fuccess, there appeals were made to a ' pretended

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' pretended divine power as openly exerted in con-' firmation of them." To prove this affertion in regard of the Arians, he relates that Philostorgius the Arian has recorded numbers of miracles as performed by the chiefs of that herefy, all which, he tells us, in the judgment of that learned and accurate critic Photius, who has preferved a compendium of Philostorgius' history, were mere forgeries, and inserted into his history with design only to countenance and support the party in which he was engaged; and to show that the Catholics were guilty of the like appeals to pretended miracles, he cites three or four miracles related in their favour, which, without finding the least flaw in the testimony recording them, or even pointing out one fingle circumstance or reason to prove them forgeries, he only fays in general, that their circumstances give us the strongest reason to suspect they were forged by the Homoousians in favour of their particucular tenets, that is, by the orthodox Christians in favour of the divinity of Jesus Christ. From the above pretended probability, and the supposed reafons of suspicion, he draws this final conclusion: Now it is not to be supposed, but the same principles of zeal, which induced either the Arians or Athanasians to commit the above-mentioned forgeries, to propagate these and such like ficitious stories, would extend itself to their other relations of the extraordinary kind, that were made to serve the same purs or some case there each charact

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poses; and accordingly must render them all justly suspected. Brook's Exam. chap. vi.

XV. It is really amazing to fee how industrious the mind of man is to blind and deceive itself when engaged in a bad cause, of which this reasoning of Mr Brook is a glaring example; for charity will. not allow me to suppose that he saw the malice and difingenuity of it. He lays the foundation of his argument by basely misrepresenting the conduct of the Catholic and orthodox party, and from this misrepresentation he supposes as highly probable. that appeals would be made by both fides to miracles, to a pretended divine power as openly exerted in favour of their respective tenets. The weakest judgment cannot fail to see the folly of such a supposition, and how much it contradicts common fense; for if the contest was carried on with all the animosity and fury that the most bigotted and inflamed zeal could produce, how is it possible that either party should appeal to pretended miracles as openly exerted in their favour, without exposing themselves to inevitable detection and confusion? for would not the other party have immediately exposed such pretended miracles? would they not have discovered the fraud, detected the forgery, and made a most powerful handle of fuch pretences to confound their adversaries? Nay, is not this the very argument that Mr Brook makes use of himself to prove the reality of the miracles of the

the preceeding centuries, that they were performed in the presence of enemies who wanted neither will nor power to detect them, had they not been real? and is not this one of these very corroborating circumstances which, as we have seen, is required by him to give human testimony its highest lustre and efficacy? But he goes on to prove that this was actually the case, and tells us that Philostorgius, the Arian historian, has recorded many miracles said to have been performed by those of that party, which, by the testimony of the great and learned Photius, were all forged and recorded by him, only to ferve a turn; and he then mentions feverals faid to have been done on the other hand, in favour of the Catholic doctrine, which, in his opinion, are no less fictitious than the former. Here again is another gross misrepresentation. The Catholics did appeal to miracles, real miracles, not pretended ones; miracles performed in the prefence of multitudes, and for the reality of which the fullest evidence of human testimony has been handed down to our days, and which were never contradicted nor called in question, not even by the Arians themselves. These Mr Brook takes no notice of. The Arians seeing the advantages the Catholics drew from these undeniable interpolitions of Almighty God in their favours, had recourse to the same arms, and pretended that miracles had been wrought also by some of their party: But what was the confequence? Whilst the splendour

dour of those miracles wrought in favour of the truth, made the Catholic doctrine triumph over all its enemies, those pretentions of the Arians served only to confound themselves, and bring disgrace and contempt upon their party; just as in our own days the fame pretences to miracles in the Jansenists served more than any thing they had done to open men's eyes, and let the world fee the folly and perfidy of that faction. It was with reason then that Photius passed so severe, but just a censure upon the miracles related by Philostorgius; but does he pass the same censure upon those related by St Ambrofe, St Athanasius, St Augustine, and the other great lights of those times? By no means: he knew these had all the evidence that could be defired to convince mankind of their reality, and that the Arians themselves had never dared to call them in question. As to those examples of miracles which Mr Brook relates, as faid to have been performed in favour of the Catholic doctrine, either there is a full and fufficient testimony for them or not : if not, then they are out of the question : it is not for them we contend; if there be, then I defy Mr Brook, notwithstanding his bold and proofless affertions, to point out one single circumstance in them to render them incredible, but what the fame or a fimilar one shall appear in many of those of the three first ages, yea, in those of the scriptures themselves. From what has been faid, it will eafily appear how ungenerous and unphilofophical

phical it is in Mr Brook, from the above mifreprefentations, and pretended probability and fuspicion,
to conclude all at once that all the Catholic miracles were forgeries and fictitious stories, than which
conclusion nothing can be more absurd nor unreafonable; for even allowing that these instances of
Catholic miracles he cites be not sufficiently attested
to us, that does not prove them to be forgeries, because the proper testimony for them may have been
lost; but much less does it follow that even all others are forgeries also, for which the most ample
testimony, even with all its corroborating circumstances, are preserved to this day; and yet this is
the wise conclusion he draws from his premisses!

XVI. I cannot leave this ridiculous argument without observing further, that the same way of reasoning, especially if the misrepresenting freedom be also allowed, will serve admirably well for a Heathen or Deist to deny the miracles of Moses, because he and the Egyptian magicians both pretended to miracles in defence of their respective tenets; or for Dr Middleton to deny all the miracles of the three sirst ages, because St Irenæus attests that the followers of Simon and Carpocrates pretended to work miracles as well as the true Christians, and appealed to them in defence of their pestiferous heresies. And this shows how admirably well calculated this way of reasoning is to disprove

the continuation of miracles in the church after the three first ages.

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XVII. A fourth argument, though mentioned fome time after the former by Mr Brook, must be taken in here, because it contains another answer to it, by plainly contradicting the ground-work on which the foregoing objection is built; for, pointing out some of the differences between the miracles of the first ages, and those after Constantine, he fays, "Another circumstance is that public appeal which was made, that confident attestation which was given to the truth of them in both these periods, which may indeed be probably accounted for in the one case, but is utterly accountable in the other," page 325. He then goes on to explain this by observing, that " after the conversion of the Roman empire, the Christians must f have been sensible their forged relations could not easily be discovered; they were encompasfed with persons well affected to their party. whose manner of education had infused into their hearts frong prepoffessions in favour of such stories; that even a detection of false facts or false testimonies could be attended by no bad confequences; that the Emperors themselves would comive at fuch proceedings; that the civil power would interfere and prevent infults," &c. What a shocking picture does he here give us of the morality of these times! What idea must we have, if N2 this 11081

this be true, of all those great and holy men who flourished in them? Could Mr Brook say more to confirm the character given of them by Dr Middleton, that they were all extremely credulous and superstitious-scrupling no arts nor means by which they might propagate their principles; and of a character from which nothing could be expected that was candid or impartial? Now, if this be the case, how will Mr Brook defend the genuineness of the Bible which came to us through fuch hands? or how will he support the faith of any history, or defend himself from those very arguments which he uses against Dr Middleton for this fcandalous character he gives of the antient fathers? But letting all this pass, how will he reconcile what he here fays with what he laid down as the ground-work of his preceding argument? There he affured us that the fourth age after the conversion of the Roman empire was an age in which a spirit of pride and ambition, a spirit of faction and contention had spread itself through the world, and entirely poffesfed the hearts of by far the greatest part of the Christians—that the contest between the Arians and Catholics was carried on with all the animofity and fury that the most bigotted and inflamed zeal could produce; which made each party appeal to pretended miracles as openly performed in their fayours. One should naturally conclude from this, that the party appealing to false miracles could not fail to be detected by the vigilance and attention

tion of the other party; that it is most false to say they were encompassed with persons well affected to their party; that the detection of fuch false facts and false testimonies could not fail to have the worst consequences to those who alledged them, as their adversaries would certainly on that account expose their party to shame and infamy; that the emperors themselves, however they might connive at their own party, would yet most certainly use all their authority to discover and punish, both in person and fortune, those who should act so in the opposite side to them; and it is well known with what rancour and fury the Arian emperors on all occasions used their power in persecuting the Catholics, and taking every advantage over them. With what face then can Mr Brook so palpably contradict himself as he does in giving us so oppofite accounts of these times?

XVIII. His fifth argument, taken from the veneration paid to the reliques of faints, he expresses thus: The catalogue of miracles was not a little increased, it is probable, in the fourth and fifth centuries, by the superstitious regard to martyrs and their reliques: He then goes on, to the great honour of the Roman Catholics, to show from the expressions of several of the most venerable fathers of those times, how confonant the doctrine of these early ages on this point is to what is taught in the Catholic church to this day; and then concludes cyldence

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thus: Now, in an age when fuch a kind of fanaticifm universally prevailed, there is the greatest reafon to believe, that plain facts would be often exaggerated into extraordinary relations, and that any fictitious story, especially of the miraculous kind, which might do honour to faints or reliques, would be eagerly embraced and diligently propagated. In answer to this, I observe, if, That all he says here is a mere begging of the question, viz. That the veneration paid to the reliques of faints is fuperstition and fanaticism: This is absolutely denied by the whole body of Roman Catholics, and therefore it is childish to suppose that for granted, which is the very thing in dispute, and then to argue from fuch a supposition as from a certainty. 2dly, If he had confulted Dr Campbell, he would have proved to him, beyond reply, that no degree of fanaticism less than frenzy could ever possibly make men disbelieve their senses, or fancy they saw what had no existence; and yet there are many miracles recorded in these ages to have been performed by reliques, which are attefted by men of the greatest integrity, who declare they were eyewitnesses of them, as well as multitudes of others before whom they were performed. 2dly, Omitting all he alledges, it amounts only by his own account to a probability, which, whatever weight it may have in fuch relations as are not fufficiently attested, yet furely it cannot have the smallest weight against such as are attested by the fullest evidence

evidence of human testimony, and attended with all its corroborating circumstances; and it is for these only we are concerned.

XIX. His fixth and seventh arguments against the credibility of the miracles related in the fourth and fifth centuries are taken from the supposed impropriety of the ends, and the unworthiness of the instruments by which they are said to have been performed. But both these objections have been discussed at large when treating on the ends and instruments of miracles, to which therefore I refer, not to repeat what has been already said.

esteem in which the monastic life was held during these two ages, which he describes, and then makes this application: "What has been written concerning monks, a few particulars only excepted, is only spoiled with sictitious stories; whilst the author, indulging his own zeal, relates not what the Saint has really done, but what he wished he had done—This is the true cause and real spring of so many impertinent and ridiculous fories, so many absurd and incredible tales, with which the lives of Paulus, of Antony, of Hilarion, of Martin, of Macarius, and of various other monks, hermits, and anchorites, abound," p. 323. Here is a bold affertion, but, like numberless such in

Mr Brook's work, not the least shadow of a proof so much as pretended to. But unluckily for him, the lives of these very faints whom he mentions, were written and published to the world in such a time, and in fuch circumstances, as must inevitably have brought on a detection if any falsehood had been inferted in them; and the miracles related in them were fo public and notorious in themselves, and so perfectly well known at the time, that nothing can be better attested than they are: now, though it should be allowed that the zeal of a writer should lead him to exaggerate any fact or circumstance, or even invent any fuch in favour of the Saint whose life he writes, the only case in which this can reafonably be prefumed to have happened, is when the writer is justly suspected, and has not these qualifications which are necessary to render his testimony valid, and when the relation depends folely upon him; but when the writer is above fuspicion both for his knowledge and integrity. and when feverals concur in giving the fame testimony, and when the circumstances are such as must have brought on a detection had it been false, in this case it would be highly absurd to suppose the whole was a fiction. But unluckily for this argument, as well as for the former, it would prove by far too much if allowed to take place: for furely the regard paid to monks in the fourth and fifth ages could not exceed, nor perhaps equal, that paid by the people of God in the old law to Mofes, to Elijah,

Elijah, to Elisha, and those other saints of God who were so remarkable in their days, much less could it equal that of the apostles to their Lord and Master, or that of St Luke to his great master St Paul: If therefore the affection and zeal, which a writer has towards the one whose life he describes, is alone sufficient to invalidate his testimony when it is in favour of his hero, what an argument will Heathens and Deists make, like what Mr Brook does above, against the scripture miracles themselves?

XXI. But as the origin and nature of the monastic life is perhaps but little attended to, and scarce known to many in this country, it will not be amis here to give a brief account of it, by which we will see the injustice of those many sneers and severe censures which, by Mr Brook and the generality of Protestants, are thrown out against it, and will the better perceive the weakness of all the arguments they draw from it against the continuation of miracles.

Mence, their effect as both graher of fidulos things

During the three first ages of Christianity, whilst all the rage of hell, and the greatest powers on earth, were combined together against it, and used their joint endeavours, by the most bloody perfecutions, to extirpate it from the face of the earth, the generality of those who embraced that facred institution were saints: They made it the chief

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business of their lives to observe the facred maxims of their religion, and to live in the most perfect obedience, not only to its holy laws, but even to its evangelical counsels. As there was no earthly encouragement to make them embrace that religion, but every worldly motive to the contrary, the only view those had who professed it, was the defire of their eternal welfare, of which they had conceived fo just a value and esteem, that they willingly renounced all the goods of this life, and facrificed every other confideration in order to fecure it. Hence, their affections being taken off from the things of this world, their whole fludy was to follow the maxims and examples of Jefus Christ, and to become faints. But when the Roman emperors were converted, and the Christian religion became the religion of the court, the face of things was fadly altered; it was now no longer necessary to renounce all the things of this world in order to profess one's felf Christian: the example of the emperors engaged even those to become Christians who loved the world more than the truth; a flight perfuafion that it was reafonable, induced many others to make profession of it who had no idea of renouncing the pomps and vanity of the world, though this be fo effentially necessary in order to live up to the laws and maxims of Jefus Christ; and these again who had neither honour nor religion, had less difficulty in feigning themselves to be Christians, when they saw it was generally be-Contact come

come the mode, and an uleful means to promote their worldly interest. By these means the holy fociety of the faithful, whose only aim was to renounce the world and follow Jesus Christ, found itself in a manner overwhelmed by great multitudes of people, who entered into it from human confiderations, without possessing the least degree of the spirit of the gospel. These strangers and difguifed enemies furpaffed in number the true citizens of the holy city, and often became the most powerful in those things which depend upon number and external authority. The riches and honours which were then confecrated to Jefus Christ by the piety of those who possessed them, and which were committed to the management of the pastors of the church, to be used according to the orders of the prince of pastors, corrupted the hearts of many who were not yet become strong, and the continuance of this temptation exceedingly augmented the number of those who fell in it: Their example corrupted others, and by thefe means many followed the Christian religion, as mankind before had followed Paganism, and as those still do who follow all false religions, without reflexion, for interest or by custom. Hence that deluge of iniquity which then appeared among Christians, and which has raged among them since that period. In the midst of all these disorders, the love of Jesus Christ, a zeal for his holy law, a perfect contempt of the world, and the most ardent

dent desire of eternal good, became more eminently conspicuous in his most faithful followers, who detached themselves from the world, and became united to God with more fervour and perfection than even in the times of persecution. Not being able to separate sinners from the society of the faithful, they separated themselves from the company of funers, and even of those imperfect Chriflians who chose to remain among the finful many: they renounced all the advantages and pleasures of the world with fo much the more perfection, as they were become more favourable to the Christian religion, but for that very reason, in their opinion, more dangerous for piety and virtue: hence vast numbers of both sexes not only left all their possessions, as their predecessors had done under the heathen emperors, but also their country, their family, their friends, the very fight of men, and all the pleafures-and innocent confolations they could receive from their company, and retired to the most lonely defarts, passing there the rest of their lives in the highest perfection, sequestered from all creatures, and wholly united with their great Creator. And this they did, not constrained by necessity to avoid the fury of persecution, but purely out of their own free choice to fly from the contagions of a wicked world, and to avoid whatever might be an impediment to their advancement in Christian perfection. Now those who made this happy choice were from their folitary life called monks dent

monks * and anchorites †, and from the defart, the ordinary place of their retirement, were called hermits ‡. Such was the origin, and such the nature and design of that way of life.

there, and with the boly liberty of an Elliph, and It must, however, be observed, that this their separation from the world did not in the least diminish that perfect union of charity and benevolence which the Christian religion requires among all its members; their obedience to the laws of the church was more perfect, their respect and submisfion for her paffors more fincere, their zeal for the purity of religion more ardent, and their love and charity for all Christians, yea, for all mankind, was stronger and more disinterested: They received and entertained strangers with more love and friendship than other men show to their nearest relations, and they were never more pleafed than when they had an opportunity of doing good in return for the greatest injuries: The more they avoided all communication with the world in all its false goods, so much the more feelingly were they. fensible of the evils which the church in general, or any of the faithful in particular laboured under: and this was an indispensible reason with them for interrupting their folitude in order to converse with men, and even to leave their retirement entirely, in order to affift them: They received VOL. II.

* Monachus, one who lives alone.

[†] Anachorita, one who lives separated from the rest of the world.

2 Eremita, an inhabitant of the desart.

those who suffered for the truth into their protection, without fear of displeasing their persecutors ; they opposed all errors and novelties without regard to the power or credit of these who advanced them, and with the holy liberty of an Elijah, and a John the Baptift, whose example they followed in their facred folitude, they reprehended even princes and their officers, when the caufe of God and of justice required it from them. Many of them were inftruments in the hand of God for converting infidels, and reclaiming the greatest firmers; and the church has received numberlefs zealous paftors from among them, who by word and example have maintained the doctrine of Tefus Christ in its purity, and preferved the fancity of the Christian morality. The print hapity and has froendling than other soon door to their nearest ras-

XXII. From this account of the monastic state, and the behaviour of those who embraced it in its earliest period, it may with justice be inferred, 1700, That the high veneration and esteem paid to it by the rest of the Christian world, was a natural confequence of its fanctity and perfection. The prophet Elijah, when he appeared among the people, was reverenced as an angel from heaven; the fanctity and penitential life of St John the Baptist procured him such an eminent veneration from all ranks of men, that even the Pharisees themselves began to think that he might be the Messias whom they about that time expected. No wonder then

that those hely folitaries who imitated these great faints in their featherstation from the world, in the purity of their manners, and in the penitential aufterity of their lives, should like them be efteem. ed as the chosen servants of the Most High God. and as fuch reverenced and venerated. What Mr Brook, along with Dr Middleton, observes upon this, is extremely just : " That monkery" (this is the name they give it in derision,) " in those days was an order of men fo highly esteemed in the church, and fo much reverenced by the people, as to be reputed the perfection of a Chriftian life, and the very pattern of an heavenly one. The monaftic state was thought an angelic inflitution, a bleffed and evangelic life, leading to the mansions of the Lord; a way of life worthy of heaven, not at all inferior to that of angels; and the perfons who engaged in this flate were looked upon as the very flower and most valuable ornament of the church, and were stiled in a peculiar manner the servants of God. Accordingly, the principal fathers of the church, both Greek and Latin, employed their whole authority and eloquence to extol the perfection, and recommend the practice of the monkilh order." Brook's Examin. P. 319. All this is certainly true, and proved by Dr Middleton, in his Introd. Difc. from which Mr Brook takes it, from the express testimonies of the writers of those times: The obvious confequence that common fenfe draws from fanaticifin:

from this account is, that the monastic state must certainly have been a flate of the highest perfection; mankind must have been convinced by what they faw with their eyes, of the fanctity of those who professed it, otherwise it is impossible so univerfal and fo high an efteem could have been given it. Let us only judge from ourselves-let any fet of men amongst us make ever so great a profession of virtue and fanctity-let the most eloquent tongues and pens of the age be employed in extolling their institute, and recommending it to the practice of others,-would this make any impression on the minds of mankind? would it procure any regard or esteem for those men, if their lives gave the lie to their profession, by acting contrary to what was faid of them? No, no; this would only bring upon them the greater contempt, and expose their panegyrists to the utmost fhame and confusion. The praises then given by the holy fathers to the monastic order, the univerfal esteem and veneration paid to those who professed it, is the most convincing proof of their eminent fanctity, and of the high perfection in which Hence we may observe, 2do, That it they lived. is most unjust and unreasonable in Dr Middleton, Mr Brook, and other Protestant writers, to pretend, from this very univerfal regard paid to these people, to draw conclusions against them, and expose them on that account to contempt and ridicule, by attributing that regard to superstition and fanaticism:

fanaticism : Common fense laughs at fuch conclufions, and fees at first view, that luch an universal veneration, which continued for ages, and contimies through the whole Catholic Church, to be paid to the monattic inflirations to this day, could never pollibly have had an existence, if those facred inflitutes had not most justly deserved it. No less unreasonable is it to pretend, from this veneration, that the miracles related in those times to have been performed by those holy perionages, were, on that very account, incredible : Common fense is shocked at such pretensions, and with the justest reason observes, atio, That if Almighty God was pleafed to perform any miracles at all in those days, these were the very people by whom we might expect he would perform them: Men detached from all worldly concerns, fequestrated from the linful world, living in the greatest innoeency and purity of manners, facrificing all for the love of God, and fludying continually to pleafe him! If we may judge of the divine conduct by what he had actually done in former times, these were surely the proper instruments in his hand for working miracles; and in this respect we have the frongest presumption in their favour. A positive testimony, then, that this was actually done; a tellimony given by all the writers of those times, by men eminent for their integrity and learning; a testimony given in public as of facts perfectly well known to their hearers, and

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which, if false, could not fail to have been detected, to the disgrace of those who attested them; a testimony, I say, of this kind, joined to so just a presumption, if it does not amount to the fullest conviction, the faith of all human testimony whatever must be discarded from the world. That such was in fact the case we shall see in its proper place, and here shall only conclude from what has been said, that nothing can be more unreasonable nor more unphilosophical, than what Dr Middleton and his Protestant antagonists have said upon this subject.

justesty reason observes, error I has if Almbothy XXIII. We come now to another argument nsed by Mr Brook, against the credibility of the miracles of the fourth and fifth ages, and which is the ninth in the order I have related them. In this he feems to exult with a particular confidence, and spends a great many pages in illustrating it. He proposes it as follows: " From the surprising likehels of the Popish and Pagan religion, &c. it has been rightly concluded" (by Dr Middleton, in his letter from Rome). " and there is the greatest reason to believe, that the religious worthip of the Catholics, in its principal and di-4 stinguishing parts, was originally derived from the gentile ritual. In like manner, from the great similitude of the Pagan miracles, and those recorded in the fourth and fifth centuries, from the near refemblance of their feveral relations. from.

from the likeness of the nature, the circumstantices, and the occasions of them both, it may rea-" fonably be prefumed, that the histories of the miracles of monks, of faints, of martyrs of those 'ages, were taken, for the most part, from the extraordinary accounts which are given of antient fages in the Gentile world." He then goes on to give feveral examples of both; and, in order to show the great resemblance betwixt them, concludes with fuch an air of triumph, and with fuch a contemptuous difregard for all the miracles related in these times, that one would think he had really faid fomething unanswerable against them. How far this is true thefe few observations will how it! test extent of and or they called Cod liftered his hely prophers to know things at a

likeness in many miracles related of saints to some of those extraordinary things related among the Gentiles, which are certainly false, what conclusion could in right reason be drawn from it? will it follow from thence that those miracles related of the saints of God are as false as the others? Ridiculous conclusion! Where is the connexion between the premisses and the consequence? Is not the same likeness to be found between heathen miracles and many of those in the scripture? Does it therefore follow that these last are false likewise? But allowing for once that this likeness should include some suspicion, on what miracles could

could that fulpicion fall? Could it in the fmalleft degree affect fuch as are supported by the fullest human teltimony that past matters of fact can have? Certainly no : Now, it is for fuch as these only that we contend. But the proper answer to this argument is to narrate the case plainly, which is as follows: From the time that Satan, that haughty spurit, falled in his attempt of putting himself upon an equality with his Maker, he has continually endeavoured to gratify his ambition by imitating the works of God among men i thence, if the Almighty inflireted priests, and obtations, and facilfices, and temples among his cholen people, for his fervice. Satan took care to have the fame honours paid to him by his votaries. If Almighty God inspired his holy prophets to know things at a distance, or foretel things to come, Satan, too, endeavoured to imitate this high prerogative of the divinity, in the delusive answers he gave by his oracles, or by those who, like the young woman in the Acts, had familian spirits. In like manner, if Almighty God gave proof of his divinity by working miracles among mankind, Satan was not wanting to procure homage to himfelf by the like means, either actually performing extraordinary things by inchantments, as in the magicians of Egypt, and Simon Magus, or in deluding his blinded votaries by appearances, as were many of the prodigies related among the Gentiles, or by exciting talle relations of fuch things among them, and getting Muon them

them to pass for truth among the vulgar. Now, how ridiculous an argument would it be, to fay, that because there were priests, and oblations, and temples among the heathers, to which those of the church of England bear a great similitude, therefore we may reasonably presume, that these last were taken from the former? or to alledge, that because there were oracles, and people that had familiar spirits among the Heathens, which foretold things to come, or discovered things fecret, to which the prophets related to have exifted in the first three ages of the church, have a striking likeness, therefore it may reasonably be prefumed these last were no less diabolical than the former, and were only alledged in imitation of them? No less ridiculous furely is it to argue, that because there is a likeness betwixt some of the miracles related of the faints of God, and fome of these false prodigies related among the Gentiles, therefore these last are of a piece with the former, and no more to be regarded than they. It is not called in question that the miracles of Moses and the prophets are much more ancient than any of these related among the Heathens; the natural prefumption here then is, that those of the Gentiles were taken from those related in the facred scripture, as it is very certain that many of the articles of the Heathen mythology are nothing but corrupted imitations of the truths contained in these divine oracles; confequently,

confequently, if Almighty God following the fame dispensations of providence in the church of his Son, as he did in the old law, shall be pleafed to work miracles by his holy faints, of the fame nature, and in fimilar circumstances with those performed of old by Moses and the prophets, can there be any thing more ridiculous and unbecoming a man of fense, or more unworthy a Christian, than to pretend, because there is observed a likeness in some of those miracles performed by the faints of God, and those faint and imperfect imitations of the miracles of Mofes and the prophets related among the Heathens, that therefore those related of the faints of God are to be rejected as fictitious, and looked upon only as copied from these Heathen originals? Is it not the most natural and obvious conclusion to fay, that as they are of the Tame nature with those of the Old Testament, performed entirely for finitar ends, and in finitar vincumftances, therefore they undoubtedly arise from the fanie divine original? and that whatever is faid against these of the faints, upon account of their refemblance with those of the Heathens, will equally affect those of the foripture where the fame refemblance is found? This reasoning will appear in the ftrongest light, if we consider some of those very examples which Mr Brook makes use of to prove the likepels he contends for lady mendar i tions of the at the contained in chale cavine practed;

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XXV. Pythagonas, fays he, and Apollonius, if we may believe the writers of their lives, bad on admirable gift of conversing with the brute creation. and then he adds fome infrances related of the authority they had over the irrational creatures, and the obedience these paid to their commands; but St Jerom relates examples of fuch a power in St Hilarion, and St Anthony, as Ruffinus does of Macarius : and thence he concludes that thefe last are no less fictious than the former. But had he remembered his Bible, he would find that Moses had a much greater power over both the irrational and inanimate creation than any thing that is related of the two Heathen philosophers : witness his conduct in the plagues of Egypt, where locusts, frogs, and other vermin came up in innumerable multitudes to plague and pubilla the Egyptians at his defire, and at his defire disappeared. It is true, in the scripture relation of these things, Moles is only reprefented as the inftrument in the hand of God in working thefe wonders; but is it pretended that St Hilarion, St Anthony, and St Macarius were any thing elfe in the wonderful power they showed over the brute creation? Was it not in the name of God, and for his glory, that they performed these wonders? Why then refer their minacles to the fictitious stories of the heathens, and not rather to those of the holy scripture, to which they bear a much greater likeness both in themselves, and in the manner and ends for which they were performed?

mirely's eff of converging with the baste creation,

XXVI. Again, fays Mr Brook, it is related of Apollonius that he could render himself invisible; the fame thing is related of fome faints, who being in imminent danger of falling into the hands of enemies, and having recourfe to prayer, were rendered invisible to their enemies, and by that means escaped falling into their hands. But is it not alfo related in hely writ, that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were struck with blindness with regard to the door of Lot's house, so that they groped about, and could not possibly find it? and that the Syrian army that was fent to take the prophet Elisha prisoner, were treated in the same manner with regard to him, by which means he escaped being taken by them? and did not Christ himfelf become invisible when they wanted to make him king, and he passed through them unobserved? and did he not instantaneously render himself invisifible to the two disciples at Emaus after he had discovered himself to them?

XXVII. There was a certain family, he goes on, among the antient inhabitants of Italy, called the Hirpi, who once a year, when they facrificed to Apollo upon mount Soracle, used to walk through the fire unburt. But the Christian monks far surpassed these Heathen priests in subduing the destructive power

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power of fire; of which he relates fome examples. and from the fimilitude he spies betwixt them, concludes, that these last were no less fictitious than those of the Hirpi. But is it not also related in the word of God, that the three holy children walked in the midst of the fiery furnace unhurt. yea, without so much as the smell of fire upon their cloaths? and does not Mr Brook strenuously defend the miracle that is related at the martyrdom of St Polycarp, when being laid on a pile of wood. and fire fet to it, the flames refused to touch the Saint, but formed themselves into an arch round about him, without daring to come near him? How childish then is it in him to reject instances of this kind in the fourth century, merely because of their refemblance to what is related among the Heathens, and fo earnestly defend a much more, uncommon effect of the same kind in the second? How unjust are men in their balances, especially when engaged in a bad cause!

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AXVIII. If Pythagoras and Empedocles, says he, had the power of suppressing winds and stopping hail, of calming storms, of making rivers and the sea itself afford them and their companions an easy and safe passage, Martin and Gregory have not suffered this power to go unrivalled. True; but does not the word of God afford us several examples of the same kind? The Red Sea was obedient to Moses, the river Jordan to Joshua, and assorded Vol. II.

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them and all their armies an easy and safe passage; Moses and Samuel commanded the storms and hail, and they obeyed them; our blessed Saviour and St. Peter walked upon the waters; and Christ rebuked the stormy winds and the raging sea, and there became a great calm; is it therefore any thing incredible that Almighty God should do by a Martin or a Gregory, his holy and faithful servants, what he had so often done to others such from the earliest times?

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XXIX. Let us now stand still a while (to use the words of Mr Brook himfelf upon this occasion). and take a fhort review of this mighty argument, in which he fo loudly exults, and fee what important purposes it may serve. Can any thing be more unchristian and uncharitable than to put miracles done by holy men, and in the name of the living God, in the fame class, and upon the fame footing with the fictitious stories of the Heathens, to which they have but a very distant and inconfequential refemblance in the facts related; and not rather class them with those of the holy scriptures, to which they bear the greatest resemblance, both in the facts themselves, and in all their circumstances? Is it not a most ridiculous argument to pretend, that, on account of this faint likeness to Heathen miracles, they are to be rejected as fictitious, though ever fo fully attested by the strongest evidence? Is it not beyond measure unworthy of a Christian

Christian to reject and laugh at the above and such like miracles of the saints as trisling, ridiculous, about and what not, while yet we find that there is scarce one of those to which he gives these epithets, but severals of the very same kind, and almost the very same things done, are to be found throughout the whole scripture? Let common sense then judge and decide the weight and importance of this mighty argument.

XXX. After Mr. Brook has, in the manner we have feen, collected together, and fet off in the best dress he could, all those various arguments which are made use of against the credibility of miracles in the later ages, he concludes by attacking the tellimony, of these holy fathers themselves who relate them; and here he is guilty of fuch unfair dealing and fuch gross misrepresentation, that I dare fay even his admirers, if they confider it, will be as shamed of it. It is not my intention here to follow after all he fays on this head: I shall only observe two things; first. The chief argument on which he grounds his exceptions against the testimony of those holy fathers Sts Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerom. Ambrose, and the rest, is, that they contradict themfelves, and contradict one another in the testimony they give of miracles in their days, fometimes affirming that miracles are entirely ceased, and even. enquiring into the cause of this cessation; at other times relating miracles as performed in different places

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places even in these times, and before their own eyes. On this Mr Brook expatiates with all the strength of his eloquence, and, by those little arts which are well known in the fchools of logic, endeavours to display this argument as unanswerable. But how unworthy and ungenerous is it in him to do fo! We have feen above, from the plainest teftimony of St Augustine in his retractations, the distinction between the extension and universality of the charifmatic graces, with the visible signs of the communication of the Holy Ghoft, and the performance of particular and occasional miracles independent of these graces; the former is acknowledged to have ceased before the days of St Augustine; the latter, we contend, has continued in every age of the church till this day. Now St Augustine expressly declares, that wherever he speaks of the ceffation of miracles, he means only the former kind, but by no means the latter, many remarkable instances of which he assures us were consistent with his own personal knowledge; Mr Brook had read this passage of St Augustine, which is a key to all that the other holy fathers have faid upon this fubject, and intirely diffipates Mr Brook's objection; this, I fay, he had read in St Augustine, because he refers to it; with what face then could he conceal the truth, and fo grofsly mifrepresent the fense and meaning of these holy men?

XXXI. I observe, secondly, that Mr. Brook, on this head, uses a great many pitiful reflections, in order to render suspicious the testimony of the fathers of the fourth and fifth ages, fimilar to those used by Dr Middleton against all the sathers in general, and which, if allowed, would frain their characters as fo many fools and knaves, with as great reason as what the Doctor alledges against the characters of those of the ages before them: Now Mr Brook justly condemned all the Doctor had faid against those of the three first ages; with what face then can he give the fame ungenerous, treatment to those of the fourth and fifth ? especially when we consider that the felf-same arguments by which he condemns the Doctor, equally condemn himself: For if the fathers of the fourth and following ages were all a fet of fools and knaves, from whom nothing candid, nothing impartial can be expected, which must be the case if what he fays of them be true, what becomes of the faith. of history? what becomes of the Bible, which comes to us only through their hands? what becomes of Christianity? Let Mr. Brook or his admirers answer these questions, if they can, and Dr Middleton's party will learn what answer to give them when urged by Mr Brook against them.

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XXXII. I have now examined all the arguments of any note used against the credibility of the miracles related after the first three ages, and P 3 I have

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I have shown that they all proceed either upon false suppositions or misrepresentations; that the conclusions drawn from them, when the case is properly stated, have not the least connection with the premisses; that they may all be used by Deists and Heathens against the miracles related in the scriptures with as great show of reason as they are used against those of the fourth and following ages; in a word, that they are nothing but mere fophistry. clothed with pompous language, turns of wit, and bold affertions, by which they may indeed impole upon superficial readers, but can never bear the test of strict and attentive examination. It cannot be doubted but that Mr Brook has faid all that can be faid upon the fubject; neither his abilities, nor his will to do fo, can admit of the smallest difficulty: Since therefore all he has faid is fo little to the purpose he intends, we may justly conclude, that not the smallest reason can be brought against the credibility of the miracles of the fourth and following ages, either from the facts themselves, or from their circumstances; and consequently that fuch miracles in these ages as are properly vouched by fufficient testimony, cannot in justice be rejected. This is further confirmed by what we have feen in the preceding chapter on the manner this question is handled by Dr Middleton and his Protestant adversaries. Their setting out altogether by begging the question, their being all the same, and proceeding upon the same principles at the bottom, their arbitrary

arbitrary extending or limiting the needs of the church as best agrees with their systems; their allowing the self-same reason to have the greatest strength in one age, and none at all in another, according as it makes for or against their views; their different contradictory systems, being all mere arbitrary hypotheses; all these observations, and others such as we have occasionally made in the preceding chapter, evidently show their utter want of all solid arguments against the continuation of miracles in any one age of the church since her commencement to this present time.

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Presumptive Evidence for the Continuation of MIRAGLES throughout all ages.

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charact, A idently Brow wiele want while of all his I. TA HOEVER ferioully confiders what has been advanced in the two preceding chapters, will, I dare fay, readily agree that there cannot be produced one folid argument against the credibility of miracles in whatever age they are faid to be performed, provided their exittence be fufficiently attested by unexceptionable witnesses. have carefully examined one by one all the pretended arguments usually brought to disprove the credibility of miracles, and we have shown them to be altogether lame in every respect, perfectly frivolous, and utterly incapable of even fo much as weakening the credibility of a well attefted miracle: By this means we are brought back to what I showed at large in another place, that as testimony is the only way by which the existence of miracles can be proved to those who were not eyewitnesses of them, so it is a full, perfect, and fusicient means for this purpose; that all the metaphysical arguments which are brought against the existence of any miracle a priori, and extrinsical

to the testimony on which it is founded, are but mere fophisms, and can never, in the eye of common fense, have the least weight to influence the mind, or weaken that conviction of its existence which the force of testimony gives her; and therefore, that the only rational objection that can be made against the existence of any miracle, must be fuch as strikes directly at the testimony itself by which it is supported. Upon this ground we might superfede the consideration of all presumptive evidence for the perpetual continuation of miracles in the Christian church, and proceed to prove it by positive testimony; but as we do not want great plenty of fuch evidence, and that of a much more folid and fatisfactory nature that what the Protefrant writers against Dr Middleton have made use of to prove the continuation of miracles down to the various periods assumed by them; and as the difplaying of this prefumptive evidence will add a peculiar luftre to the force and strength of the positive proofs which we shall afterwards consider, I propose at present to take a view of this presumptive evidence, and show the folid grounds on which it is founded. The same that to this me man to the same

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II. Though Mr Brook proposes the presumptive evidence for the miracles of the three first ages under several different heads, yet, upon examination they are all reducible to this one postulatum and its consequence. The exigencies of the church

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church, for the support and propagation of religion, made it highly becoming Almighty God to work min racles in these ages, therefore it was to be expedied, and we may reasonably presume be did so. This is the postulatum upon which all the different fystems of the duration of miracles proceed This is the ground-work and foundation on which they are built; and the jarring superflructures raifed upon it differ among themselves only from the different manner in which this postulatum is applied; but they are all the same at the bottom, and equally folide For it is plain from what, we have feen, that these various applications are merely hypothetical, and only used by their abettors as best suits their preconceived systems, without the leaft shadow of reason for one more than for another. Dr Middleton, though he adopts this very postulatum as his own reason for the continuation of miracles during the apostolic age, yet he laughs at it heartily in his adversaries for extending it beyond that age; yea, he pronounces it highly rash and presumptuous to form arguments upon the supposed necessity on propriety of a divine interposition, in this or that particular case, and to decide upon the motives and views of the Deity by the narrow conceptions of human reason. Pref. p. 20. This is certainly a most just remark, in which, we heartily join iffue with the Doctor, especially, under the authority of St Paul, who, sensible of with and its confequence. The emperation of this

this great truth, cries out in a rapture of admiration. O the depth of the riches both of the wifdom and knowledge of God! how unfearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out I for who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counfellor? Rom. xi, 22. And indeed, there is nothing wherein our modern Christian infidels more manifestly expose the impiety of their prefumption, than by their pretences of this kind, canvaffing the ways of God by their narrow conceptions, and reducing the works of the Omnipotent to the examination of their prefumptuous judgment, and boldly deciding of what is becoming or unbecoming the Deity to do by the feeble efforts of their blinded understandings. Instead of this method of proceeding, the Doctor affures us with no lefs reason, that the whole which the wit of man can possibly discover, either of the ways or will of the Creator, must be acquired by a contrary method; not by imagining vainty within our felves what may be proper or improper for him to do, but by looking abroad, and contemplating what he has actually done: This rule is most judicious, and contains a folid ground for us on which to proceed; for though there must be innumerable cases in which it will be most becoming the Almighty to act, tho' we can by no means judge of their propriety a priori, yet certain it is, that God never will act either in the ordinary course of his providence, or by an extraordinary

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extraordinary interpolition, but when it is highly proper and becoming him to do fo; confequently, if we open our eyes and contemplate what Almighty God has actually done, in certain circumstances and for certain ends, we may with the utmost reafon conclude, that it is highly becoming him to act in the fame manner in fimilar circumstances, and where the fame ends are to be obtained; and from this folid principle we draw as an undoubted confequence, that it is then to be expected, and we may reasonably presume he will do so. However just and reasonable the above rule is, yet the Doctor is far from being so reasonable in the application of it; for he goes on to tell us, that the only way by which we are to know what God actually has done, is by attending seriously to that revelation which he made of himself from the beginning, and placed continually before our eyes, in the wonderful works and beautiful fabric of this visible world. Pref. p. 21. Here the Doctor is doubtless much to be blamed; for though it might do very well from a Deift, who acknowledges no revelation made by God but in the works of the creation, to admit no other way of knowing what he has done but by contemplating these works, yet furely it is ridiculous in a Christian, and such the Doctor profesfes himself to be, who believes the facred scriptures to be the word of God, to act in this manner; these facred writings contain an ample account of the conduct

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conduct of the Almighty in a great variety of particular cases concerning the affairs of man, and of the dispositions of his providence in the government of this universe: Consequently, not only in the works of the creation, but also by considering these divine oracles of the scriptures, we have a most ample field wherein to contemplate what God has actually done in innumerable cases, and from whence to conclude with the greatest assurance, what is at all times becoming him to do, when such, or similar cases occur.

III. It is upon this ground our prefumptive evidence for the perpetual continuation of miracles is founded; and from this we see, at first view, the wide difference there is between the name of this prefumptive evidence brought by us, and that which is used by Dr Middleton, and all his Protestant adversaries, for their systems: Theirs is founded upon this general postulatum, the exigencies of the church, which every one of them applies and interprets according to his own fancy, judging of the views and motives of the Deity by the narrow conceptions of human reason, for which the Doctor juftly ridicules the others, tho' he also uses it when it serves his own turn. The presumptive evidence I propose to bring is founded upon folid facts, recorded for our instruction by the authority of God himself, and from which the conclusion flows with the most undoubted certainty: VOL. II.

fo that the I give it the appellation of presumptive evidence, yet when the force of it is thoroughly considered, and well comprehended, it will easily be allowed, without exception, a presumptive evidence of the highest degree, and even bordering nearly upon absolute proof, if not entirely such.

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IV. But though the Doctor is juffly blamed, as a Christian, for restraining the means of knowing what God has actually done to the contemplation of the works of creation, and for excluding, by that limitation, all the knowledge we have of his conduct from his holy scriptures; yet doubtless the works of creation are not to be rejected for this purpose: On the contrary, they also afford us a most noble field for such contemplation. and a prefumptive proof for the continuation of miracles very much to our purpole. When treating on the ends of miracles as discovered to us by the light of reason, we considered the glorious fabric of this visible creation; we examined the nature of good and evil with relation to different creatures; we compared the material part of the creation with the rational and intelligent, in order to know their respective values; we considered the intention and views which God had in the inanimate creation, and in all those laws by which the material world is governed; we took a view of the beneficent purpofes which manifestly appear throughout

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throughout the whole creation; and from our reafonings on these heads, confirmed also by revelation, we drew as a necessary consequence, "That the rational and intelligent creatures are by far the chief and most excellent part of the creation: That without them all the rest are of flittle or no fignification: That they are the prin-' cipal object of the care and attention of the Cresator: That all other inferior beings are made only to be, either mediately or immediately, ' fubservient to their happiness and perfection, and are of no use but for this purpose; and therefore, as the whole present order and laws of ' nature are only established as subservient to these great ends, and for promoting by them the glory of the Creator, it is not only reason-' able, but most highly becoming and worthy the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, to suspend any of these laws, and alter the present order of things, or to perform any other miraculous effect he pleases, when the promoting his own honour and glory, either by procuring the hap-' piness and perfection of his rational creatures, or by averting their mifery and moral turpitude, or even by inflicting just punishment upon them, ' may require his doing fo: Nay, should the cafe happen wherein these ends could not so proper-' ly nor fo perfectly be acquired by other ordinary means, it would then be not only becoming Almighty God, but it would even in some fort be incumbent

incumbent on him to work a miracle in order to ' procure them." And in the same chapter we showed at large, that miracles are always much more efficacious means for procuring happiness and moral good, and for preventing mifery and moral evil in intelligent creatures, than all the other ordinary means by the agency of fecond causes can be; and therefore, that Almighty God not only may, but that it is most becoming his divine goodness to use them from time to time for such ends. Now, our reasonings on this subject are neither restrained to time nor place; they have equal force in all countries and in all ages; they are as convincing under the gospel as under the law; in the eighteenth century of Christianity, as in the times of the apostles. Consequently, wherever the happiness or moral persection of rational creatures is to be promoted, and especially where the ordinary means for doing fo are found ineffectual or less proper, it is most highly becoming the divine goodness to interpose by miracles for so worthy and so laudable a purpose; and therefore it is highly reafonable to prefume he will from time to time continue to do fo throughout all ages to the end of the world. Thus we find, even from that limired view of the divine conduct assigned by Dr Middleton, in the contemplation of the visible creation, a very strong and just prefumption to believe, that the divine wisdom has by no means confined the working of miracles to any particu-

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lar period of time; but that as the happiness and perfection of his rational creatures will be a continual object of his defire while time endures, fo it will at all times be highly becoming his goodness to perform miracles in order to procure them. But if we consider that more extensive view of what God has done, which he himself has discovered to us in his holy scriptures, we shall there find much greater grounds to be thoroughly convinced that miracles will never cease in the church of Chrift while the world stands. Now, these grounds are taken from the following fources : 15 From the conduct of God in the old law. 2. From the conduct of Jesus Christ in the gospel. 2. From the promises of Christ. And, 4. From what we are told will happen at the end of the world; each of which we must consider apart by the light which revelation gives us concerning them.

V. By this then we are informed, that when man had lost himself by sin, and was become a prey to the delusions of Satan, this impious spirit had endeavoured to extend his empire over the whole universe, and become sole master of the hearts of men: That although Almighty God had determined, out of his infinite mercy, to redeem lost man, and restore him to that happiness which he had been deprived of by sin, yet, for his just and wise purposes, he delayed this great work for many ages, and in the mean time permitted man

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to be deluded by the devil, and hurried on by him to every excess of wickedness and vice, that by this means his pride might be confounded, and by this dear-bought experience he might be convinced of his own extreme mifery and weakness, and of the great need he had of a Redeemer. But whilft the generality of mankind were thus abandoned to themselves, Almighty God was pleased to select one nation from among the rest, whom he preferved from this general corruption, and to whom he made an express revelation of himself and of his will, of the religious worthip which he required from them, and of the law by which he commanded them to walk. This revelation was made by means of Mofes and the prophets, to whom God communicated his will, and gave authority in his name to announce it to his people: But it was extremely imperfect when compared to what was afterwards to be made by the Redeemer, who, as was often foretold by the holy prophets, would come in the fulness of time to give a full and perfect revelation of the will of God to men, discover to them the fecrets of the divine wisdom, bring all nations to the knowledge of the true God, and teach them a more holy law, and a more perfect worthip, of which all that had been taught by Mofes was only a shadow, a figure, and an emblem. In the mean time, the great God showed a particular care of his favourite people, whom he made the depolitaties of his divine oracles, and fent them his holy fervants

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fervants from time to time, to teach, instruct, exhort, and preferve them in his fervice. At last the Redeemer appears himself, cloathed with the Omnipotence of God, by which he gave the most convincing proofs of his mission, fulfilled and abolished the Mosaic institution, and discovered to the world that pure and holy religion which was to be the only means of falvation to mankind, and which was therefore to be the religion of all nations, and to continue to the end of the world. Here then we find, that Almighty God has made two different external revelations of his will to men, the one by Moses, the other by Jesus Christ his son. The former was very imperfect both with regard to the knowledge it discovered of God and of heavenly things, and with regard to the nature of the worship required by it from man; the latter was full and ample in both thefe respects, giving us a most glorious knowledge of God and of the next world, and discovering to us a most pure and holy worship due to the Sovereign Being from us his creatures. The Mofaic institution, with all its facrifices and ceremonies, was only a shadow of the good things to come, a figure and emblem of the religion of Jesus, and was therefore incapable of cleaning the foul from fin, and of perfectly reconciling man with his offended Creator. The Christian religion is the substance of which the former was only the fladow, and contains in itfelf every celectial grace and benediction necessary for

for the perfect fancification of our fouls, and for bringing us to the possession of eternal happiness. The religion of Moses was temporary, and to last only till the Redeemer should appear and abolish it, being only intended to prepare the world for receiving the more perfect religion of Jefus; but this was confined to no space of time, but to last till the end of the world, while the fun and moon shall endure. Finally, the law of Moses was given only to one nation, and confined to one people; the law of grace under Jefus Christ was intended for all nations, to bring all to the knowledge and service of the true God, and to be established from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. some acceptance of the second and a second of the second o

VI. Jesus Christ being come into the world, the law of Moses was thereby abolished, and an end put to his inditution, that the more perfect religion of Jesus might be established in its place: Now Almighty God has been pleased to give us a particular history, authorised by himself, of the conduct of his divine providence during the whole time the Mosaic institution had its being; in this history we have an account of vast numbers of miracles actually performed by God on different occasions, and for many different ends and purposes during all that period; from this account we evidently see, by the authority of God himself, on what occasions, and for what ends it is worthy of Almighty

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Almighty God, and becoming his divine goodness, to work miracles; if therefore we find, that the fame occasions must often occur, and the fame or fimilar ends be every day to be promoted in all ages of Christianity, to the very end of time, it must follow of course, that it will at all times be equally worthy of Almighty God, and equally becoming his goodness, to perform miracles on these occasions, and for promoting these ends; and if it be indeed becoming God to act in this manner, we have from thence the strongest reason to presume, that he will at least from time to time continue to do fo in every age to the end of the world : Nay, we shall find, when we come to consider the particular cases, that there is much greater reason to expect this in the Christian church than was under the law; and therefore, if it was becoming Almighty God to work miracles in all ages under the law, and that he actually did fo, it is much more becoming him to work them in every age under the gospel, and we may with greater reason expect he will actually do fo.

VII. I have above, in showing the ends of miracles from revelation, given an ample detail of the various occasions on which Almighty God wrought miracles under the law, and of the several ends he had in view in doing so; some of these tended ed more immediately to promote the divine glory, by the general good of the whole people; others seemed

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feemed to have for their more immediate object the perfection or happiness only of particular perfons; though by being afterwards published to the world, they contributed no less than the former to the divine glory and the good of mankind, as to their grand and ultimate end Of the first kind were chiefly these following: 1. To convince mankind that the doctrine preached to them by those who wrought these miracles in the name of God, was truly his doctrine, and thereby to engage them the more readily to receive it, and the more stedfassly to adhere to the belief and profesfion of it. 2. For defending this doctrine thus revealed to them, and for preferving the religion he had given his people against all attempts that were made in after-ages to corrupt and destroy it. 3. For afferting his own honour against all false gods, and their idelatrous worthip. 4. For engaging his people to believe and trust in him, to love him, to obey him, and to ferve him only, and thus to promote the fanctification and perfection of their fouls. 5. To affert and vindicate the honour of his priesthood, and of all those holy things which were more immediately used in his service, and to procure due respect and veneration to be paid them. 6. To manifest the fanctity of those holy people whom he fends from time to time as his messengers to mankind, and to gain due respect and credit to them, that, by their words and examples, others may be stirred up to greater piety and

and fervour. 7. To convince idolaters, and those who know him not, that he is the only true God, when at any time he is pleafed to communicate the knowledge of himself and of his holy will to them. Of the second kind, where the immediate end intended was the benefit only of particular persons, we considered four different classes. The first contains those cases where Almighty God communicating any truth, or giving any commission, or making any promise to any particular person, either by himself immediately, or by others commisfioned for this purpose, was pleased to convince them, by working miracles, that those things were really from him, and not delufions. The fecond contains those cases where we find Almighty God condescending to work miracles in favours of particular persons as a reward of their virtuous actions, particularly their acts of charity towards their fellow-creatures in diffrefs, their confidence in his goodness, and their constancy in his service. In the third class I collected those examples where we find the divine goodness working miracles, and frequently of the very first rate, merely to supply the bodily wants of particular persons, and that fometimes where the wants were of fo little confequence, as to unaffifted natural reason would feem perfectly trifling, and altogether unworthy of fuch divine interpolition. The last class contains those cases where the Divine Wisdom was pleased to work most amazing miracles, for the punishment punishment or correction of sinners, as the immediate end intended, and for the manifestation and exaltation of his justice in those who rejected the offers of his mercy, as ilshaid to appelyon is it

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VIII. It cannot be denied by any Christian, that all these ends and occasions of miracles were most worthy of God, and that it was highly becoming his divine wifdom to perform the most stupenduous miracles in order to procure them. To deny this were to impeach the Divine Wisdom of folly, fince we find in fact, that for these very ends God did, on many occasions, perform the most amazing miracles. Now, if it was thus becoming God, and worthy of him to perform miracles on fuch occasions, and for these ends, in the old law, it must at least be equally becoming him, on all such occasions, and for obtaining fuch ends, to act in the fame manner, in the new. It would run out to too great a length to illustrate this in each particular case: I shall therefore confine myself to fome few of the most remarkable.

1X. The Christian religion assures us, as we have feen above, that Almighty God has been pleased to make two different revelations of himfelf to man; the one less perfect by Moses, the other most ample and perfect by Jesus Christ; as in the first of these he discovered several important truths to mankind concerning himfelf, and laid moadllang

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down a body of laws to his people, of which he demanded the most exact performance from them, it was necessary they should be thoroughly convinced that this revelation was from him, the Creator and fovereign Lord of the whole universe. Doubtless he could have infused into their minds a thorough knowledge and full conviction of these things, without having recourse to any exterior means whatfoever; but this would have been acting in a supernatural manner, and by no means connatural to the state and condition of mankind; it would moreover have been forcing conviction upon them, wherein their free-will could have had no share. This method therefore he did not use in fact ; but giving commission to his servant Moses, a man like themselves, to declare his will to his people, he thought it worthy his infinite goodness to work the most amazing miracles by the hand of this Mofes in their prefence, as the most convincing proofs that he was authorized by him in all that he had told them; now these were proofs entirely connatural to their state and condition, falling under the testimony of their senses, and subjected to their fcrutiny and examination: But though these proofs carried along with them the strongest conviction of the truth of what Moses taught them, yet they did not necessitate their free will, nor force the people to believe what was attested by them: nay, we find in fact, that notwithstanding those proofs, they often rebelled against the light that Vol. II. R attended

attended them, and murmured against Moses, as if he had deceived them. Hence in receiving this revelation as from God, and subjecting themselves to this law as coming from him, their service in this was a reasonable, a free, a voluntary service, such as God chiefly requires from his reasonable creatures. Hence then it was not only becoming the divine wisdom to confirm this revelation by miracles, but it was even necessary he should do so, in the supposition that he wanted such a voluntary service from his people, as miracles were the only proper and connatural means of procuring such service from them.

X. Now then, if this was the case with the first revelation which God made of his will to mankind; if it was becoming his divine goodness, and worthy of him to confirm it by miracles; if it was even necessary he should do so, in order to obtain a reasonable and voluntary service from his people, it follows as a necessary consequence, that it must be no less becoming his divine goodness to act in the fame manner when he made his fecond and more perfect revelation to the world. And a little attention will show that the necessity of his doing fo was much greater in this last case than in the former. For in the first place the truths he revealed by Jesus Christ concerning himself and supernatural things, were valtly more fublime, more incomprehensible, more spiritual than those he rethe Supering vealed

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vealed by Moses; and yet he demands the most fubmiffive belief of them from mankind. The law promulgated by Jesus Christ was by far more holy, more opposite to felf-love, more contrary to all the defires and inclinations of our corrupt nature than the law of Moses, and yet he requires the most perfect obedience to it; the sacrifice of our heart, and of all our affections, and the mortification of all our carnal defires, and the fanctity and perfection which God demands from us under the gospel, is vastly greater and more sublime than what he required under the law. From all which it follows of course, that if it was necessary to work miracles in order to procure credit to the revelation of the law, which was less perfect, and where the belief and practice of things less difficult to flesh and blood, and more agreeable to all our natural inclinations, were required; it must certainly be much more necessary to make use of the fame most powerful means, in order to convince mankind of the divine revelation of the gospel, where fo much more incomprehensible truths are proposed to our belief, and such greater perfection is required from us in practice. Besides, in the revelation made by Mofes, the people were expressly forbid to give ear to any one who should invite them to leave their religion, even though he should appeal to figns, and those figns should come to pass; it was therefore most necessary when the gospel was revealed, by which the law was abo-R 2 lished.

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lished, and a more pure and holy worship instituted in its place, not only that miracles should be performed in confirmation of it, but even that these miracles should be so extraordinary, both in their greatness and number, as to over-rule the above prohibition, and convince the Jews that the Author of this revelation was the expected Messias, who, they knew, was to come for this very purpofe. Lastly, The revelation made by Moses was made to a people already acquainted with the true God, the children of the patriarchs, who had the memory of the promises made by God to their fathers quite recent and common among them; who were at the time it began to be made in a state of cruel flavery, from which the first step of this revelation was to deliver them; all which of course powerfully disposed their minds to receive and embrace it: Whereas the revelation of the gospel was chiefly intended for the Heathen world, a people absolutely ignorant of the true God, drowned in the groffest idolatry, funk in all manner of vice and wickedness, whose principles, practices, and affections, were all diametrically opposite to the pure maxims contained in that revelation. Confequently, if it was not only worthy of God, but even necessary to work miracles for the establishment of the Mofaic revelation, though the people to whom it was made were fo much disposed so receive it; how much more worthy of the divine goodness, yea how much more necessary was

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it, to work more and greater miracles in order to establish the gospel among a people from whom on so many accounts it was to find the greatest and most inveterate opposition? If therefore it was so worthy of God to do this, and so necessary for the purpose he intended of subjecting all nations to the yoke of Christ, this gives us a strong and well grounded presumption to expect he would actually do so.

XI. But we must further observe, that as the gospel revelation was intended not for one nation only, as was that of Moses, but for all the nations in the world; and as all these nations were equally ignorant of the true God, and guided by principles and affections equally opposite to the rules of the gofpel, when it first appeared among them, the necessity of the help of miracles to over-rule all opposition, and conquer the force of prejudice and felf-love, was not confined to its first appearance in one or two nations only, but was equally great in every nation wherever it was first preached; and therefore it was equally worthy of God, in all these different nations, to introduce the knowledge and belief of the gospel among them, by working miracles for that end; and as the knowledge of the gospel was not to be communicated to all nations at once, but was by the disposition of the Divine Providence to be the work of many fucceeding ages, even till near the end of the world, before the whole should be compleated, we have here the same strong and R 3 well

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well founded prefumption, as above, to expect that the miraculous powers will therefore continue in the church of Christ throughout all ages, and never fail to be exerted when new Heathen nations are to be brought to the knowledge and belief of the gospel, by those holy souls whom God shall be pleased to raise up and employ for that purpose.

XII. Doctor Middleton indeed makes a great parade of the genuine strength of the gospet, and the natural force of those divine graces with which it was fo richly stored, Faith, Hope, and Charity; and pretends in his preface to the Free Inquiry, that as foon as Christianity had gained an establishment in every quarter of the known world, which he thinks might have happened before the death of all the apostles, there was no more need for miracles, which, he concludes, were then finally withdrawn, and the gospel left to make the rest of its way by its genuine strength, and the above divine graces. As this is an argument not only made use of by Dr Middleton to prove the ceffation of miracles in the apostolic age, but also by some of his Protestant adversaries to prove their cessation after the respective periods assigned by them; for they all pretend that the exigencies of the church being the only reason why miracles were wrought, and these exigencies continuing as long as they are pleafed to think proper, and no longer, on their ceffation

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cessation miracles behaved to cease also; and as this argument, as dressed up by these gentlemen, has a specious appearance, it is necessary to examine what real worth it contains.

XIII. I would therefore alk these gentlemen what they mean by the genuine strength of the gofpel, and thefe divine graces, Faith, Hope, and Charity, with which it is so richly stored? If they mean that when the gospel is once cordially received and embraced by any person or people, and these divine virtues once take full possession of their hearts, it is then capable of producing the most admirable effects in their fouls, by the change it works in their fentiments, in their hearts, in their affections, and in their whole conduct and behaviour; it will be readily allowed that its strength in this respect is most admirable: To be convinced of this we need only read the wonderful effects it produced in the apostles themselves, and in the first converted Christians, as related in the holy scripture; but in this fense it is nothing at all to their purpose. If they mean that when the gospel is thus received and embraced by any whole nation, and established in it by law, that there is no more need of miracles to induce that nation to receive and embrace it; this also will be readily granted, but is as little to their purpose as the former. If they mean that when a confiderable number in any nation have cordially embraced the gospel, the strength of their faith.

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faith, hope, and charity will be fufficient to enable it to make its way through all the rest of that nation, and convert the whole, without the help of miracles; this is certainly false, and contrary to No doubt the fanctity and virtue of experience. Christians is a great argument in favours of their religion, but too, too weak alone to induce Heathens, who have little notion of true virtue, to embrace it. Were there ever more holy or more virtuous and perfect Christians than the apostles and first converts? yet their virtue and holiness were not the means by which they converted others, but the miracles they wrought, and to which they always appealed as proofs of the doctrine they taught: If they mean, that if Christianity be once fully established in any one large country, such as was the Roman empire, it then acquires sufficient strength to spread itself through the other nations by the divine virtues of faith, hope, and charity without the further aid of miracles; this is no less false and contrary to experience than the former cafe. Laftly, If they mean, that when Christianity is once fully established in any country, the solid reafons that can be given to prove its truth, and the motives of credibility alledged in its favour, are fufficient to convince any reasonable man of its divine original; this will readily be acknowledged with regard to the people of that country who have been brought up from their infancy in the knowledge of it, provided they believe all thefe motives

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motives of credibility on which it is founded, and of which the miracles wrought at its first establishment is certainly one of the most effential; but experience shows, that all these motives of credibility are too weak to convince even those of fuch a country who have been educated in the knowledge of Christianity, when, becoming afterwards Atheists or Deists, they deny the existence of miracles at its first establishment, and would need other miracles performed before their own eyes to convince them. Now, if this be the cafe, even in those who have had the advantages of a Christian education, what is to be expected from a poor barbarous Heathen nation, funk in ignorance and vice, and whose principles, affections, and practices, are as diametrically oppolite to the pure maxims of the gospel, as those of the Romans were when it first appeared among them? But let us illustrate this by a particular case, which will at once flew the force of my argument : Let us suppose then, that not only the Roman empire, but that all Europe had cordially embraced the gospel; that, like the first Christians, they continued stedfast in the doctrine of the apostles, and had all but one mind and one foul; that faith, hope, and charity had taken fuch deep root in their hearts, that they were all without exception perfect Christians: Surely if ever the genuine strength of the gospel appeared in the world, it would appear in this case. Let us suppose further, that many learned

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men among them had displayed in the strongest light, and in all the pomp of eloquence, the powerful motives of credibility in proof of the truth of their religion; yet what would all this fignify to the conversion of the people of China, for example, or of Japan, or the wild Indians of America? Let a number of European missionaries go among these people, burning with zeal, and full of faith, hope, and charity; suppose them to learn their language, and preach the gospel among them, would all they could fay, without the help of miracles, be more effectual to convert these people, than what the zeal of the apostles was in their fervent preachings to the Heathen world in their days? and if miracles were necessary to give a fanction to what the apostles taught, notwithstanding their fanctity and zeal, will they not be at least equally so in the other case, even though we suppose the fanctity and zeal of these preachers was equal to that of the apostles? Will not the doctrine of the crofs appear as great folly on being propofed to the Chinese and Indians, as it did when proposed to the Romans? Would not all the mvsteries of the gospel be as incomprehensible to those as they were to the Gentiles in the days of the apostles? Would not the passions, and prejudices, and vices of these nations, be as great an obstacle to their embracing the pure maxims of the gospel, as those of the Heathens were at its first promulgation? If it be faid that the folid reasons and motives Call

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tives of credibility could be displayed to these people to convince them, it must be remembered, that the chief and most essential of these motives are the miracles wrought at the first establishment of Christianity? and must not these appear as incredible to a nation that never heard of them before, as the very mysteries themselves, of which they are the proofs? Besides, the motives of credibility would only be for the learned; the great multitude of the people could not give application to penetrate and comprehend them. If, therefore, when the gospel is first proposed to any Heathen nation, the obstacles and difficulties it must have to encounter, both from its own doctrines and maxims, and from the passions, prejudices, and vices of men, and we may add also, from the endeavours of the devil to oppose it, be no less in all fucceeding ages, than at its first appearance in the world, it must of course be no less worthy of God, and no less necessary for converting any nation, to work miracles for their conversion in every fucceeding age to the end of the world, than it was at the first establishment of Christianity.

XIV. This will still further appear, when we consider, that under the Mosaic dispensation, when Almighty God wanted to bring even particular persons among the Heathens to the knowledge of himself, and of what was then his true religion, he made use of miracles as the proper and conna-

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tural means for this purpose; and we have seen above, that he looked upon this as an end most worthy of fuch divine interpolition; thus he miraculoufly cured Naaman's leprofy, to procure by this means his conversion: The miraculous preservation of the three children in the fiery furnace, and of Daniel in the lions' den, most effectually convinced two great and powerful Heathen kings, that the God whom these holy men served was the only true God, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth: If, therefore, it was worthy of Almighty God, and becoming his divine wisdom and goodness, to work such glorious miracles under the law, for the convincing fingle persons of his being the true God, even fo many ages after that law was established among his people, how much more worthy of him must it be to work miracles in every age of his church, when the conversion of whole nations to the faith of Christ is the end to be gained by them? on solvent sain stell on best to

XV. The preferving the true religion, once established, from all attempts to corrupt or destroy it, is another glorious end which, as we have seen above, Almighty God judged most worthy of himself to procure under the law, by working on all such occasions, in whatever age they happened, the most amazing miracles; and this he did, whether these attempts were made by open force, or secret fraud; whether the danger arose from the Hea-

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thens perfecuting from without, or from impious men among the people of God themselves. See this illustrated at large by numerous examples in chap, vi. Now, from this conduct of the Divine Wifdom under the law, the probability and prefumption of his observing the fame conduct under the gospel is exceeding strong. The works of God are not like the works of men, subject to be corrupted and destroyed by numberless accidents. contrary to the will and design of those who perform them. When Almighty God performs any work, no power of man, no malice of hell can possibly destroy it against his will, nor disappoint his views and defigns in performing it; Not a hair of your head falls to the ground without your heavenly Father, as we are affured by Christ himself. Now, when the law was given by Mofes, and the whole ceremonial of religion ordained among that people, the defign of Almighty God was that this religion should continue to be professed and practifed by them till the coming of the Messias; that whilst the rest of mankind were, by his incomprehenfible judgments, permitted to follow their own inventions, and to be led away by the delufions. of Satan, there might never be wanting at leaft one nation, wherein the worship of the true God should be preserved and practised. Almighty God then having thus determined, that this religion should continue on the earth among his chosen people till the Redeemer should come to perfect VOL. II. it,

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it, we find that he was never wanting during all that time to protect and defend it whenever any attempt was made against it, by working most glorious miracles, as the proper and connatural means for that purpose. If now we examine the idea the scripture gives us of the doctrine taught by Christ, and of the duration of the Christian religion in the world, we shall find, from the most affured declarations of God himfelf, that it was his express design and resolution when he instituted that religion, that the purity of his true doctrine should never be corrupted in his church, and that this holy religion should remain to the end of ages, in spite of all attempts to destroy it. Among the many testimonies of holy writ for this purpole, the following are particularly beautiful. In Isaiah lix. 19. Almighty God makes this glorious promise to the Christian church, So Shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rifing of the fun: when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgreffion in Jacob, saith the Lord. And as for me, this is my covenant with them, faith the Lord. My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy feed, nor out of the mouth of thy feed's feed, faith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever. Let now any perfcn

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fon of common fense consider these words attentively, and fay if it was possible to declare, in stronger terms, that the Spirit of God should never leave the true posterity of Jesus Christ, and that the pure doctrine once revealed to them should never depart from among them while the world endureth; nay, Almighty God expressly declares, that when the enemy shall come in like a flood, and attempt to corrupt or destroy the work of God, his holy Spirit always abiding with his church, shall lift up a standard against him, to preserve the purity of the truth once put in her mouth, against all the rage and fury of the enemy, and his utmost efforts to destroy it. Another glorious promife to the fame purpose we have in Pfall lxxxix. 2. where God fays, I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Verse 27. &c. I will make him my first-born higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His feed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven .- Once have I sworn in my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. This beautiful promise, confirmed by a solemn oath, that Christ, the true David, should S 2 reign

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reign for ever, that the church, his kingdom, should last to the end of ages, and that his feed fould endure whilft the fun and moon had their being, needs no application; it speaks for itself in the plainest terms; it is also again confirmed by the angel Gabriel, and expressly applied to Christ, when he told the bleffed virgin, that her fon fhould fit on the throne of his father David, and reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom, faid he, there shall be no end, Luke i. 33. Christ himself affores us of the same truth, when he fays, Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, Matth. xvi. 18. In which words he declares the perpetual stability of his church by the folid foundation on which she is built? He foretels indeed, that the gates of hell shall not be wanting in their continual attempts to destroy her, but all to no purpose; for he at the fame time passes his facred word, that they shall never be able to prevail against her: nay, in the fourteenth and fixteenth chapters of St John he affures us, that after his ascention into heaven, he would fend the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, upon his followers, who should abide with them for ever; and that his office should be, to teach them all truth; in which promife he verifies what Almighty God had faid by Maiah many ages before, that the boly Spirit. to be given to the Redeemer, and the words once

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XVI. From these clear and plain testimonies of the word of God, the following truths manifestly flow: 1. That the kingdom of Christ, his church, shall continue till the end of ages, whilst the fun and the moon endureth. 2. That the true doctrine revealed by him to his church, the words which he puts in her mouth shall never depart out of her mouth, but continue to be constantly taught and professed by her, from henceforth and for ever. 2. That the enemy, the gates of hell, shall not fail to affault her with all their power, coming upon her like a flood, and like a torrent to overwhelm and destroy her. But, 4. That God will never be wanting on all these occasions, to protect and defend her; that the spirit of the Lord, her guardian and teacher, shall lift up a standard against the enemy, which will baffle all his attempts, fo that hell's proud gates shall never prevail against her; nay, instead of prevailing, we are further affured, 5. That those wicked men, whom the enemy shall stir up as his instruments to fight against Chrift and his church, shall be brought themselves to ruin and defolation, as the just punishment of their impious attempts. Behold, fays Almighty God, foretelling the attempts of wicked men against his church, Behold, they Shall surely gather together, but not by me; but he immediately adds their

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their doom, Whoever shall gather together against thee, shall fall for thy sake.—No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn, Isaiah liv. To the same purpose he speaks in Psal. lxxxix. above-cited, where, after the promises made to Christ, the true David, he adds, ver 22. The enemy shall not exact upon him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him, and I will beat down his soes before his sace, and plague them that hate him.

XVII. That these prophecies have been literally fulfilled which foretell the violence of those attempts the enemy would make against the church of Christ, we are fully assured from the histories of all ages. No fooner did the begin to appear in the world, and fend out her zealous pattors to declare the glad tidings of falvation to mankind, than immediately the most violent and bloody persecutions were excited against her; hell feemed to be let loofe upon her, and having engaged the greatest powers upon earth in its party, and inflamed all the most violent passions and utmost malice of the heart of man, aimed at nothing less than crushing her in the bud; and destroying her entirely upon her first appearance; but all in vain; her divine spouse lifted up his standard in her defence, her foes were beat down before her face, idolatry that refe up against her fell for her fake, and she at last glorioully

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outly triumphed over all these her enemies. Scarde was peace, from without, reftored to the church by the conversion of the Roman emperors, when the powers of hell attacked her in another but more dangerous manner. Though beat out of one hold, they did not give over their attempts ; they shifted their ground, but laid not aside their malice. Finding her an over-match for them in the open field, they refolved to attack her in covert ambush, hoping to obtain by secret fraud what they found was impossible for them to do by open force; and as they law they were not able by perfecutions to extinguish her faith, they endeavoured by herefies to corrupt it, and of course entirely deftroy it. St Paul forefeeing the unrelenting attempts of Satan for this purpole, foretells that there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest, 1 Cor. xi. 19. thereby pointing out to us the reason why the divine wifdom would allow thefe things, to wit, for the greater merit of his faithful fervants who should stand fait to their duty under all thefe. dangers. Now, to promote this his defign against the church with the greater certainty, Satan makes use of her own rebellious children, men, as St Paul describes them, levers of their own selves, covetous, boafiers, proud, blasphemous-incontinent, fierce, despifers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. These, the better to accomplish their

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their ends, though rapacious wolves, yet cloath themselves with sheep's cloathing, put on a form, an outward shew, of godliness, but denying the power thereof, men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the faith, 2 Tim. iii, Men of this kind the devil ftirs up from among the children of the church, who, as the fame great apostle tells us, Depart from the true faith, giving heed to feducing spirits and the doc rines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrify, and having their consciences seared as with a hot is on, I Tim. iv. And having thus corrupted their own faith, and hardened them in his fervice, he makes use of them to spread his diabolical doctrines among others, to seduce the faithful by corrupting them with false tenets, and, if possible, to make lies and falsehood triumph over the truths of Jesus. But all in vain; the same divine power which protected the spoule of Christ from open force, we are affured shall equally defend her from these secret fnares; thro' the unsearchable judgments of God these dangerous attempts shall prevail with many, but, when they have come to the length permitted by the divine providence, we are affured, by the same great apostle, that then they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be made manifest to all men, 1 Tim. iii. o. St Peter alfo, describing these dangerous attempts of Satan against the truth, speaks thus: There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable

nable herefies; but he immediately affures us, that they bring upon themselves swift destruction; and though he also lets us know, that many shall follow their pernicious ways by whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of; yet he immediately adds, that their judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation flumbereth not, 2 Pet. ii. From these graphical descriptions given us by these two apostles, we see displayed to us the nature of those most violent and dangerous snares which the gates of hell would use in all ages against the church, but we are affured at the same time, as we have feen above was foretold by the prophets before, that they should never prevail against her, that they should proceed no farther, that they should fall for her fake, and their damnation should not flum. ber: That is to fay, we are affured that whilst God permits the devil to rage against his church, by endeavouring to corrupt the purity of her doctrine by damnable herefies, he never fails at the same time to defend her truth, to manifest their folly, and give her in the end a triumphant victory over all their endeavours.

XVIII. Now, what are the means which we may expect the divine wifdom will make use of for this purpose? the invincible fortitude of martyrs? the heroic constancy of consessors? the zealous labours of the church pastors? No doubt all these things will contribute greatly to consirm the faithful, and defend

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defend the purity of the true doctrine : But these alone will not be fufficient; nay, all these in some degree are to be found even among heretics; herely has had its martyrs, who, blinded by their passions, and hardened by enthuliaim, have gone to death in profession of their false doctrines; herefy has also had its confessors, who have suffered imprisonment and banishment for its fake; and among the characters which St Paul gives of heretics, one is, to put on a form of godlinefs, an outward show of piety, of zeal, of virtue, and experience shows the indefatigable labours which many heretics have taken to propagate their fect, and corrupt the minds of the faithful. In fact, we find in the facred scripture that these things alone did not fuffice to defend the true religion under the law when exposed to such dangers, and that therefore Almighty God himfelf judged it necessary, and altogether becoming his divine wifdom, to raife up another more efficacious standard to preferve it. In the dangerous attempts against the true religion made by Jezebel and Achab, there were martyrs, for Jezebel flew the prophets of the Lord, 1 Kings xviii. 12.; there were confessors, for Obadiah hid a hundred of them by fifties in a cave, and fed them with bread and water, Ibid.; there were zealous pastors; the great Elijah who alone was worth thousands, who did not fail to stand up as a wall in defence of the truth, and to reprove she king for his impiety, threatening him with the delend divine

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divine justice if he persisted in it; but were all these sufficient to confirm the people and defend the truth? No : they still halted between two opinions, many of them bowed their knees to Baal. and were upon the point of forfaking the God of their fathers entirely. For this reason the holy prophet, full of zeal for the glory of his Master, had recourse to the all-powerful standard of miracles: and no fooner did thefe appear, than the clouds were dispelled from the minds of the people, their doubts were cleared, their faith confirmed, and with one voice they all cried out, The Lord he is God! the Lord he is God! Miracles then are the proper arms to defend the truth when attacked by error; they are the connatural and efficacious means to convince the human heart, because they are the language of God himself, which can never be spoken by his enemies; they are the broad feal of heaven, confirming the doctrine of God beyond all reply. Hence we find, as we have feen above at large, that, during the whole period of the Mosaic institution, whenever the true religion was attacked by its enemies, the great God never failed to use these powerful means to defend it: from which we draw this most undoubted and undeniable confequence, that if it was worthy of God, and becoming his divine wisdom and goodness, to defend his true religion under the law, by working most amazing miracles on every occasion when it was in any danger, and that he actually did fo in

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in order thereby to preferve the purity of his then true religion during the period of its duration, how much more worthy is it of him? how much more becoming his infinite wifdom and goodness to act in the fame manner, and work the most glorious miracles in defence of the Christian faith, on all similar occasions to the end of time, when the gates of hell and the malice of man combine with united rage to destroy it? That he will in fact defend the true doctrine of his beloved Son from all fuch attempts to the end of the world is undoubted; he has repeatedly promifed, and Iworn by his facred felf, that he will do fo: That miracles are the most proper, connatural, and most efficacious means for this purpole is felf-evident; that the using them for this end is worthy of Almighty God, and highly becoming his divine wisdom, is most certain, from what he actually did on all fuch occasions under the law; therefore we have the highest prefumption, and the ftrongest probability, that he will actually continue to work miracles in defence of his truth throughout all ages, even to the end of the world. Nay, I go a step further; we have feen that, under the law, the other means of defending the truth without miracles were infufficient; that miracles were therefore necessary for that purpose: are they less so under the gospel? at least, it cannot be denied that, if not absolutely necessary, they are certainly the most proper, the best suited to convince the human heart, and there-

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fore the most efficacious means for the above purpose: And shall we say of the divine providence,
who so liberally used these means for desence of
his truth under the law, that it is no more than
probable he will use them for the same end under
the gospel? how ungenerous such a thought? how
injurious to the divine wisdom? We therefore with
the highest reason conclude, that the conduct of
Almighty God under the law, in desending the purity of his holy religion by miracles, not only gives
us the highest probability, but even a very strong
degree of certainty, that he will never be wanting
under the gospel in using the same glorious means
from time to time in desence of his truth so long as
the world endureth.

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Vol. II.

XIX. Here I cannot help expressing my afternishment at the conduct of those gentlemen who pretend to restrict the duration of miracles in the church to any certain period. Their reasoning on this matter appears to me one of the most humiliating examples I have met with of the weakness of our boasted reason when engaged in a bad cause. However they disagree among themselves about the precise period to be assigned for the cestation of miracles, yet they are all most unanimous in giving the same reason for this pretended cessation at the different periods they assign. As long, say they, as the church continued pure, the gift of miracles continued with her, but when the corrup-

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tions of Popery crept in, when her doctrine was corrupted by superstition, when the Athanafian herefy, fays Mr Whilton, was established by her councils, and she became Athanasian, Antichristian, and Popish, then that glorious gift of miracles was withdrawn from her, and the devil fubstituted his lying wonders in their room. Is it possible to hear them argue to this purpose without being filled with admiration and indignation? with admiration, to fee that men of fense and learning should speak in a manner so unworthy of themselves; with indignation, to hear them speak in a way fo injurious to Almighty God, and fo contrary to every circumftance of his conduct which he has revealed to us with relation to this matter? Can a ferious Christian in his fober fenses allow himself to believe, after what we have just now feen, that at the very time when the truths of God are supposed to stand in the greatest need of his protection; when the gates of hell are prevailing over the church of Christ; when the enemy, like a torrent, is upon the point of carrying all before him; that at that very time Almighty God should abandon his truth to be totally corrupted and defaced, should give up his church as a prey to the enemy, and without the least opposition allow him to turn the chafte spouse of Jesus Christ into an adultress? Is it possible, I fay, that a serious Christian can allow himself even to think such a thought, and not be shocked at the blasphemous supposition? and it

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And yet it is upon this blasphemeus supposition, to wit, that God Almighty has altogether abandoned his church to the tyranny of Satan, that he has proved false to all the solemn promises made to her, that he has allowed the devil, for numbers of ages, to work lying figns and wonders to delude poor mortals, without giving them the least defence against them: It is, I say, upon this blasphemous supposition that all the various systems of Protestants for the cessation of miracles are chiefly founded; and thus the main reason alledged by them for this pretended cellation of miracles is the very one from whence we ought to draw the contrary conclution, if we argue from the conduct of God in the old law, from the perpetuity of the Christian faith, the stability of the church, and the folemn promises of Almighty God, made and confirmed by oath in the prophets, and the like facred promifes made by Christ himself in the gofpel. But to return an amidnible in the employed

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on? And XX. Another great end which Almighty God judged most worthy to procure by his divine interposition under the law was, to affert and vindicate the bonour of his priesthood, and of all those holy things which were more immediately used in his service, and to cause a proper respect and veneration to be paid to them; the sacred scriptures are full of most amazing miracles wrought for these ends; severals of the most remarkable of which I have related above.

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al ove. Now, from this conduct of Almighty Cod under the law, we have another firing prefumptive argument for the perpetual continuation of miracles throughout all ages under the gospel, and which militates with much greater strength for thefe last than for the former; for the priesthood of Aaron, and all the holy things used in the exteriors of religion, were only shadows of the good things to come; but the priesthood instituted by Jesus Christ was the substance of which the other was only the figure. The priesthood of Aaron. and all its facrifices, and other functions, were incapable of cleanling our confciences from fin, or of conferring the grace of God to the foul; the functions annexed to the priesthood of Jesus Christ, by applying the merits of his passion and death to our fouls, cleanfe us from all our past fins, adorn our fouls with the grace of God, and enable us to avoid fin for the time to come : The priesthood of Aaron and its functions were confined to one nation; that of Jesus Christ was extended to all nations from the rifing of the fun to the going down of the fame: The priefthood of Aarch was to last only for a time, till the better things flould come; that of Jefus Christ was to last till the end of the world, whilft the fun and moon endured. Now then, if it was worthy of Almighty God to work miracles, and those of the most amazing nature, to vindicate the fanctity of the priefshood, and of the holy things used in its ministry under the law, though it

it was but a shadow, a figure, a temporary institution, and incapable of bringing grace to our souls,
or cleaning away our fins; how much more werthy of his divine wisdom must it be to work miracles in order to vindicate the fanctity of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and of all the facred utensils
used in its functions, which so immensely exceed
that of Aaron in holiness, excellency and utility to
our souls? And if Almighty God did, in sact, perform many great miracles in defence of the former, we have from thence a well grounded presumption to expect he will be no less ready to do
so in defence of the latter, and that in all ages and
in all nations, wherever the circumstances may require it.

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XXI. Now the same train of reasoning may with equal force be applied to all the other ends for which God was pleased to work miracles under the law, and a little attention will evidently show, that wherever necessity, expediency, utility, congruency, or other such cause can be assigned, which made it worthy of God, and becoming his divine wisdom and goodness, to perform miracles for all such ends under the law, as we see in fact he did, all concur with much greater force to show it vastly more worthy of him to act in the same manner for the same or similar ends under the gospel, and consequently we have from this the strongest presumption to expect he would do so. Hence, when

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ther we confider the renewing a spirit of fervour and devotion among his people in times of general relaxation; or the manifesting the fanctity of his holy fervants, that their words and examples may make a deeper impression on the minds of others, and more powerfully incite them to virtue and pies ty or the rewarding the heroic virtues of his holy fervants, their charity, their confidence in his goodness, their consumy in his service, and the like; or the supplying their temporal necessities, especially such as they fall into for his take and in his fervice; or the punishing and correcting finners for a warning to others, and the greater exaltation of his juffice : I fay whichever of all thefe, or any other fuch holy ends, we consider, for the obtaining of which Almighty God has in fact judged it worthy of himfelf to work most admir able miracles under the law, we thall find that all thefe mult frequently occur in every nation, and in every age of the church till the end of time; and therefore as it must always be most worthy of God to work miracles for fuch ends wherever they occur, we have from this a most just and well grounded prefumption to expect that miracles will continue to be wrought from time to time in the true church of Christiwhile the world endureth day and and to could prouchly of this is not in the finise manner

XXII. We come now to consider the second fource of presumptive evidence for this truth, which is taken from the conduct of Jesus Christ in the gospel.

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gofpel. In all bhave hitherto faid; I prescind entirely from any thing related in the New Tellament; I have only confidered what God has done under the Mofaio diffeen action, and from thence have concluded what is becoming him to do under the gospel, and consequently what we may reasonable prefume he would do there. I have shown the ends which he himfelf judged worthy of a miraculous interposition in every age during the time of the law, and thence concluded that the same ends must, with much greater reason, be judged worthy of a like miraculous interpolition in every age during the time of the golpel. If now we go a Rep further, and take a view of what the holy scripture affures us Jefus Christ has actually done; both by himself, and after his ascension by his apostles, and if upon this examination we find, that both the general ends for which to many miracles were wrought by Christ and his apostles, and also the particular ends more immediately intended by them, were exactly the fame, or perfectly similar to all those. we have feen above : we will find from this another most convincing argument to presume and expect, that miracles will continue to be wrought in the church of Christ till the end of the world : For if Jefus Christ judged these ends worthy of miracles in his own days; if he continued to judge them worthy of miracles in the days of his apostles after he -himfelf had left them, with what shadow of reason could it be alledged, that he would not judge them. equally

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equally worthy of such divine interposition during every subsequent age of Christianity? or nather is it not evident beyond reply, that as Almighty God accurally wrought numberless miracles for these ends during every age of the old law, and Jesus Christ most certainly did the same both by himself and his aposles during the first age of the gospel, so we may with the highest reason expect he will continue to act in the same way in every succeeding age to the end of the world, wherever these ends are to be obtained by so doing? these ends are of the same importance wherever they occur in all ages and in all places, and no less worthy of a divine interposition at one time than at another. Let us then examine what the gospel teaches us on this matter.

rollings to helperinted the take benefitshed XXIII. In our preceeding reasoning from the conduct of God in the old law we concluded, that we had the justest grounds to presume, that when the new and more perfect revelation was made by Jesus Christ, it would be introduced into the world by miracles; nay, that the nature of the gospel, and the difficulties it had to meet with from the passions and prejudices of men, made it necessary it should be confirmed at its first appearance, by the most splendid miracles, both in number and greatness. And lastly, as these difficulties were the same in all nations wherever it should first be preached, that it was a just presumption that miracles would continue to the end of the world whenever the introducing the gospel into any.

any new nation or kingdom required it. Now, we find this conclusion was literally verified by Jefus Christ and his apostles, in the first age of Chriflianity: The miracles he wrought himself during his first publication of it among the Jews, were magnificent and innumerable; all nature was at his command; the heavens and the earth, men, angels and devils were fubfervient to his will; after his ascention, the apostles, whom he left to carry on the work he had begun, behaved in the fame manner; miracles of the most amazing nature were wrought by their hands, in proof of the heavenly doctrine they taught, the splendor of which admirable works converted waft multitudes of the people, both Jews and Samaritans, of all flates and conditions, fo that even great multitudes of the priests themselves became obedient to the faith: the change of their manners was no lefs remarkable than that of their faith; they became Christians in perfection as well as in belief, and no force of perfection could hake their confrancy and perfeverance. pel, he slid in granithto time and winders, slow.

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XXIV. Now, when the gospel had by this means obtained good ground in Judea and Samaria; when a numerous and flourishing church of Christians was settled there; when these holy souls had arrived at the highest persection, and breathed nothing but servour and zeal for the glory of God; and the good of souls, did Jesus Christ effects

fleem their good example, their fervent preachings, their piety and zeal, a sufficient means, without any further help of miracles, to carry the gofpel into other nations, even those in the neighbourhood, and with whom they were well acquainted? By no means. He well knew, that the opposition the gospel would meet with every where at its first appearance, would be infurmountable by any other natural means whatfoever, unless they were accompanied with his seal, and confirmed by miracles, as the incontestible proofs that the doctrine was divine. Hence we find, that into whatever nation the apostles went to introduce our holy religion, God Almighty never failed to accompany and confirm their words by figns and wonders. Thus in the short account St Mark gives us of the propagation of the gospel after our Lord's ascension, he tells us, that the aposiles went forth and preached every-where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with figns following, Mark xvi. 20 St Paul also affures us, that wherever he went to plant the gofpel, he did it by mighty signs and wonders, Rom. xv. 19. and puts the Corinthians in mind, that his preaching among them was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, a Cor. ii. If therefore Jefus Christ judged it necessary for the introducing the gospel into any Heathen nation, to work miracles, even though the persons he employed for that end were the apostles, those fervent, zealous, holy flecia

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holy fouls upon whom he had poured out the plenitude of the gifts of the Holy Ghoft, and made them by far the fittest instruments that ever were employed for that purpole, how much more must he judge it necessary to work miracles for the same end in all after-ages, when the opposition and difficulties will be equal, and the instruments employed so much inferior to those great men who first planted the gospel in the world? From what God actually did under the old law, we faw it highly becoming him to act in this manner under the gospel: Jesus Christ, in fact, plants the gospel, and propagates it in many nations during the apostolic age by this very means: Therefore, it is a most just and reasonable conclusion to presume and expect he will continue to propagate it throughout all nations in the fame manner till the end of the world.

XXV. To convince mankind of the fanctity of his fervants, to procure credit and authority to them, that by their words and examples others may be stirred up to greater fervour and devotion; to restore by this means the decay of piety which mankind is very apt to fall into if not roused up from time to time by some extraordinary means, is an end which we have seen Almighty God, under the law, judged most worthy of himself to procure by the most splendid miracles; and thence we justly conclude, it was no less worthy of the

terments into the world, to recel usualizates a list

fame conduct from him under the gospel. In fact we find this end was most admirably procured, both by Jesus Christ himself, and by his apostles: How were the people filled with gratitude and love to God! how did they break forth into his praises when they faw the miracles of our Saviour? And there came a fear upon all, and they glorified God, faying. A great prophet is rifen up amonest us, and God has visited his people. How were they aftonished at the miracles of the apostles, so that none of the others durst join to them, but all the people magnified them? If, therefore, this was one of the principal fruits gained by the miracles of Christ and his apostles in their days, with what colour of reason can it be doubted, that the infinite goodness of God, which has nothing more at heart than the fanctification of fouls, will continue, to the end of ages, at proper times, to fend his holy fervants into the world, to recal mankind to a just fenfe of their duty, to excite in them a spirit of devotion, to restore decayed piety, and to promote a greater fervour and zeal in his fervice, and that he will confirm and authorize their words and examples, even by miracles wrought from time to time by their means, for fo noble an end ? or wheather works substitute of the or the original or

XXVI. Another great end which we have feen most worthy of a divine interposition by miracles, was to procure a just respect and venera-

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tion for those who are in priestly orders, and for all holy things. How does the conduct of Jefus Christ, by means of the apostles, authorize us to expect he will esteem this an end worthy of miracles throughout all ages? What respect, what veneration must it have procured to St Peter, when Ananias and Sapphira fell down dead at his feet for telling him a lie, and when this their crime in telling a lie to the chief paffor of the church, was declared to be telling a lie to the Holy Ghost himself? What high ideas must it have given all the people of the fanctity, of the facred dignity of this great apostle, when they faw that his very shadow pasfing over the fick was able to cure them of whatever difeases they laboured under? What must they have thought of the fanctity of St Paul, when handkerchiefs and aprons, after touching his facred body, were also enabled to cure all difeases? With what respect must they have kept these facred relics? What veneration must they have paid to them, when they faw them fo much honoured by Almighty God, as to be the miraculous inftruments of fo great benefits to them Now, if from the conduct of Almighty God in the old law in regard to these things, we found it most reasonable to expect he would at all times. under the gespel, judge it worthy of himself to work miracles in order to procure respect to the priefthood and all holy things; and if we find, in fact, that Jesus Christ actually did so in the apo-VOL. II. **ftolic**

stolic age, does not this give us the most convincing reason to presume, that he will continue to do fo from time to time, as he fees occasion, in all future ages? If, in the old law, Almighty God was pleafed to give fo miraculous a proof of the fanctity of his holy fervant Elijah, that, after he was taken from among men, the very mantle he had worn, and which, on his being taken up, he had left with Elisha, should, upon touching the waters of Jordan, be the infirument of dividing thefe waters into two parts, and leaving a paffage upon dry ground for Elisha to get over; if he gave fo extraordinary a proof of the fanctity of Elisha some time after his death, that a dead corpse being thrown upon his grave, and touching his facred bones, should immediately have been restored to life again; and if, under the gospel, in the apoflolic age, he continues to act in the same manner, using the very shadow of St Peter, and handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched the body of St Paul, as instruments for miraculously curing all manner of difeafes, thereby giving the most convincing proof of the supereminent fanctity of these his holy servants, can there be a greater proof to convince us, that he at all times esteems this to be a manner of acting worthy of his divine wifdom, and that therefore we may with the greatest reason presume he will in all succeeding ages continue to give proofs of the fanctity of his holy fervants, by making use of things belonging

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to them in their lifetime, or of their relics after their death, as infiruments in his hands for performing miracles?

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XXVII. In the same manner, if we apply this reasoning to the other ends of miracles, such as, the rewarding the heroic virtues of his fervants, the supplying their temporal wants and necessities, especially such as they incur from their adherence to his fervice, or the punishing finners in a miraculous manner, either for their own correction, or a warning to others, or the like, we shall find our prefent argument militates with equal strength in thefe as in all the above examples. We have feen, in our preceeding argument, that thefe ends just now mentioned are most worthy of a divine interposition by miracles; we have seen numbers of glorious instances in the old law, where Almighty God was actually pleased to perform most wonderful miracles to procure them; and hence we inferred a just presumption to expect, that at all times, and in all ages under the gospel, he would be ready to act in the fame manner, when the obtaining the like ends should require it. That this was a just presumption we are assured from the conduct of Jesus Christ; if he cures the woman of her bloody flux, he declares it a reward of her great confidence in his goodness; if he cures the daughter of the Canaanean woman, he affures her it is in consequence of her faith and perseverance:

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if the multitudes charmed with his heavenly conversation follow him to the wilderness, and continue there for three days without eating or drinking, his bowels are moved with compassion towards them, and in reward of the love and affection they showed him, he once and again miraculoufly multiplies a few loaves fo as to be sufficient to feed fome thousands of people. If St Peter is thrown into prison, and loaded with chains, in order after a few days to be put to death for his ardour and zeal in his fervice, an angel is fent from heaven to deliver him, the chains fall off his hands, and the iron gate miraculously opens of its own accord, to give him a free passage out of prifon, and deliver him from the hands of Herod; if Elymas the magician strives to oppose the progress of the gospel, and to divert the Proconful Sergius from giving ear to the words of St Paul, at one word of that apostle the wretch is miraculously struck blind, in punishment of his impious opposition to the work of God. It were endless to bring all the examples of this kind related in the New Testament; these are fully sufficient to show, that the conduct of Jefus Christ under the gospel, confirms the conclusion we made from what Almighty God did under the law, viz. that there ends above mentioned are efteemed by him most worthy of the greatest miracles; and that as he has actually wrought many fplendid miracles for thefe ends in the apostolic ages, we have the strongest grounds from

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from thence to conclude, that he will continue from time to time to do fo while the world endureth.

XXVIII. From what has been faid upon this fecond prefumptive argument, it will eafily appear wherein its force properly confifts. In the former argument we concluded, from the ends for which God wrought miracles in the old law, that thefe ends were worthy of fuch divine interpolition; and therefore, that we might reasonably presume God would, in all ages under the gospel, continue to work miracles for fuch ends, when the obtaining them should at any time require it; for difference of time or place can certainly make no difference either in the value and importance of the ends themselves, as being worthy of miracles, or in the power of God to work them; nay, we considered feveral circumstances of the gospel, which shows, that the necessity of working miracles for fuch ends, was much greater under the gospel than under the law; and therefore, that we might with greater reason then expect them. In the second argument we go a step further; we consider the conduct of Jesus Christ and his apostles, as related in the New Testament, and of which we are therefore absolutely certain: We find this conduct perfectly fuch as the conclusion in our former argument made us expect; we see numbers of miracles wrought for the very fame or fimiler ends,

ends, for which Almighty God wrought them in the old law: Hence we infer, that our conclusion in the former argument was perfectly just and reafonable, and, from this actual conduct of Jesus Christ in the apostolic age, have a still greater and more convincing reason to presume, that as he began the gospel period by working so many miracles for the above ends, and by similar instruments, to those by which he wrought them under the law, so he will continue in all succeeding ages of that period, to act in the same manner when similar circumstances may require it.

XXIX. I come now to the third prefumptive argument for the perpetual continuation of miracles in the church of Christ, which is taken from his own facred promifes. I was at first in some doubt whether I should use these promises only asa presumptive proof, and not rather as a positive evidence: because they are in themselves most ample, unlimited, and confirmed with his usual oath; and the conditions annexed are fuch as must be found among Christians till the end of time; from whence we might with the greatest reason conclude, that these promises are not mere prefumptive arguments, but strong and positive proofs, that the power of miracles will never be withdrawn from the church while she has a being; for the express promises of God that any thing will be, are as strong a proof beforehand that it will

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will happen, as any politive human testimony can asterwards be that it has happened: However, as our adversaries, who limit the duration of miracles to their particular assumed periods, are of course obliged to put a limitation to these unlimited promises of our Saviour, I thought it best to give them a place here among the presumptive arguments, where examining them by the light the other reasons of this class afford us, we shall see how unjust our adversaries are in putting any restriction or limitation upon them at all.

XXX. The first of these promises I shall take notice of is from our Saviour's last fermon to his apostles the night before his passion, where after exhorting St Philip to believe in him as God, equalto the Father, and appealing to his works as the testimony given by the Father of this truth, he immediately adds with his usual affeveration, Verily. verily, I fay unto you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, shall be do also; and greater works than these shall be do, because I go unto my Father. And what soever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, John xiv. 12, 13. Now whether we confider the plain obvious fense of these wor as they lie, or the intention for which this promife was made, or the reasons upon which the performance of it was grounded, we shall clearly see that it is doing the greatest violence to the facred text

to affix any restriction or limitation to the duration of this glorious promise. For, in the first place, there is not the smallest infinuation of any such limitation either in this paffage itself or in the context: He promifes by his usual affeveration that his faithful followers, he that believeth in me, shall perform miracles equal and even greater than he himfelf haddone; the only condition required is, that the person believe in him, that is, have that strong faith in him, to which, as we shall afterwards see, the grace of miracles is particularly affixed: Now as it is a truth not to be doubted of, that Almighty God will never want true, holy, and faithful fervants in every age to the end of the world, whose fouls will be adorned with this facred faith and every other divine virtue; and as there is not the smallest infinuation from the words of this promife itself to tack any limits to its duration where this faith is found; fo there is the justest reason to conclude, that the duration of the promife will have no limitation at all. In the fecond place, the intention with which this promife was made shows this still more fully. Our Saviour is here proving his own divinity, that he himself is God equal to the Father; the argument he appeals to, as the most convincing proof of this truth, is the working of miracles; this he proposes in two different lights, first he appeals to the works he himself had done, Believe me, faid he, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else (if you will not take it on my word)

word) believe me for the very work's fake, ver. 11. but as the belief of his divinity was to be the object of our faith in all ages to the end of the world, and as the miracles he wrought himself were feen only by those of his own days, and might be called in question or denied by those of after ages, as in fact we find they have been at all times, and still are denied by many; therefore he propofes a fecond proof both of his own divinity and of the reality of the miracles he himfelf had wrought, namely, that he would even confer this very power of working miracles on his faithful followers, who should be enabled after him to perform in his name the fame, and greater works than he himfelf had done: Now this was a proof altogether beyond exception; for though an impostor might deceive the multitude by false signs and wonders after the working of Satan, yet it is manifestly impossible that an impostor should be able to confer the power of working greater miracles than he did himfelf upon his followers, and foretell with certainty beforehand that he would do fo: It is true, the apostles did not then fee this promise fulfilled, and therefore this argument would not then have its full influence upon their minds; but they afterwards, found it fully verified in themselves, and also in their disciples, and then it both gave themselves the fullest conviction, and enabled them to give the fame conviction to others also of the divinity of their Lord and Master, who had given them this promife

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promife before-hand, and afterwards most fully accomplished it in their persons. Now this intention for which this promife was made, shows clearly that it can admit of no limitation as to the time of its duration; for, as this promife of working miracles was made to his faithful followers, to be a proof of his divinity, especially where those wrought by himself might be insufficient for this purpose, either for want of being known, or for not being believed; and as these circumstances must often happen in every age, especially among Heathen nations, or Mahometans, when the gospel is first proposed to them, even to the end of the world: it therefore follows as a necessary consequence, that in every age when thefe circumstances concur, this promife will take place, and will undoubtedly be performed according as the divine wisdom shall see most suitable to the end intended. Lastly, If we confider the reasons upon which the performance of this promife is grounded, we shall see the same conclusion still more and more confirmed. He gives two reasons, first, because he was soon to leave this world and return to the Father: Greater works than these, says he, shall be do, because I go to the Father, ver. 12. Now what connection has this reason with the promise? The connection is evident and natural, " Hitherto, fays he, whilft I was visibly present upon the earth, I have wrought fuch miracles as I knew were fully fuf-· ficient for convincing you, my faithful followers,

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of all I have taught you: I also, by my own pre-' sence, have instructed you, comforted you, and 'affilted you in all your needs; but I am going to ' leave you and return to the Father; and after I ' am gone, you will be exposed to innumerable trials, perfecutions, and afflictions of all kinds, from the rage of hell and the malice of the world; but in the midst of these trials, I will not ' leave you comfortless, ver. 18. I will pray the ' Father, and he will give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the spi-' rit of truth, ver. 16. and this comforter, which ' is the Holy Ghost, he shall teach you all things, ver. 26. And when they bring you unto Synagogues, ' and magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought ' how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye ' Shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the ' same hour what ye ought to say, Luke xii. 11. ' And I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gain fay nor re-' fift, Luke xxi. 15. And lastly, for your further comfort and support under all your afflictions, ' and to enable you to overcome all your adversa-' ries, and convince them that your doctrine is from me, and that I am the true God equal to ' the Father, and that when I leave this world, I ' go to the Father, and have in all things the fame ' power with him, I will bestow upon my faithful ' followers the power of working miracles, even ' greater than those I have done myself; he that

believeth on me, the works that I do shall be do al-16 fo, and greater than these shall be do, because I 4 go to the Father:" It is plain, that all these promifes here related, and of which the most part are contained in this very last fermon before the pasfion, and given at the same time, were intended, in our Saviour's absence from this world, for the support, encouragement, and comfort of the apofiles and their successors in the work of the ministry, and of all faithful Christians, who must fuffer perfecution if they want to live piously in Christ Jesus, under their trials of whatever kind, and, at the fame time, as proofs of the divinity and doctrine of Jefus Chrift. Now, it is to be observed, that the former of these promises, to wit, the coming of the Holy Ghoft, his help and affiftance in teaching them all things, and fuggefting to them what to lay when called before civil powers, were immediately addressed to the persons of the apostles; vet nobody doubts but these promises would continue to be fulfilled to the end of the world whenever the circumftances should require it; nay, it is expresly declared, that the Holy Ghoft will abide with his church for ever for these very purposes: but this last promise of the power of working miracles was not addressed to the apostles immediately in their own perfons, but to all true believers, he that believeth on me; consequently if the former promifes, though addressed immediately to the apostles, are yet justly understood as admitting

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no limitation, and if the Holy Ghoft, abiding with his church for ever, will never fail to fulfill them as need requires, in the absence of our Saviour : much more ought this last promise to be understood in the same unlimited sense, being addressed to all the faithful in whatever age; and with greater reason must we therefore believe that the Holy Ghost, to whose grace and operation the gift of miracles is chiefly attributed, abiding with his church for ever, will never fail to fulfill this last promise also in the absence of our Saviour, when the support of the faithful, the propagation of the gospel, or any other of those glorious ends, which, as we have seen above, Almighty God judges worthy of fuch conduct, shall require his doing fo. The second reason on which the performance of the above promife is founded, is given by our Saviour in these words: And what soever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. that the Father may be glorified in the Son, ver. 13. The design of this promise was, that it might be a proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ; the bare performance of it served mightily in his absence for this purpose, as we have seen; but the manner of performing it ferves still more fo : What foever, fays he. you shall ask in my name, that will I do; when any of you, my faithful followers, shall perform a miracle, you must do it in my name, you must ask the Father, in my name, to grant it; and I here pass my facred word, that whatever you ask in this manner, in my name, and with a full faith, I VOL. II. X will

will undoubtedly perform it. We have feen above. in the rules of the criterion, how unanswerable a proof it is, that a miracle is truly fuch and the work of God, when it is done in his name; here then Jesus Christ promises, without any limitation, to perform this proof of his divinity when his faithful fervants in fuitable circumstances shall demand it of him, on purpose, as he adds, that the Father may be glorified by the Son; now, as this reason and these circumstances will without doubt occur in every age to the end of the world, especially in the conversion of infidel nations, therefore we justly conclude, that this promife admits of no limitation of time, but will be performed in every age, where the convincing mankind of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the glorifying the Father by the Son, shall require it.

arguments of presumptive evidence, that it is worthy of Almighty God, and highly becoming his divine wisdom, to perform miracles in any age, when any of the above ends shall require it; we have seen that some or other of these ends will never be wanting while the world endures; we have seen that Jesus Christ has actually wrought numbers of miracles by himself, and by his followers, for many of these ends during the first age of Christianity; and from all these grounds we conclude, that we have the most just and well grounded reason.

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reason to expect, that the miraculous powers will continue in the church to the end of time: If to these presumptive arguments we add the above solemn promise of Jesus Christ, and the reasons we have given to prove that it can admit of no limitation, I appeal to common sense whether or not this does not afford us, I do not say a presumptive evidence, but even a most positive assurance, that the power of miracles will never be withdrawn from the church of Christ while the world endureth.

XXXII. It is further to be observed, that as the above promife gives the strongest confirmation to the presumptive evidence of the two preceding arguments, fo their evidence is another convincing proof that the faid promise ought most certainly to be understood in the unlimited fense in which I have explained it. By the above prefumptive arguments we have the strongest reafon to expect, that Almighty God will from time to time work miracles in his church to the end of the world: Jesus Christ makes a solemn promise to his faithful followers, he that believeth in me, to bestow upon them the power of working even. greater miracles than he himself had done; he makes it in general terms; he puts no limitation to it either of time or place : the question is, How, long is this promife to last? If, as we have feen above, there be the highest presumption to expect X 2 -

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r d that miracles will be wrought in every age to the end of the world, this prefumption plainly shows, that the promise of Christ, to which he has tacked no limitation himself, is most certainly to be underderstood without all limitation, as we have also proved above by other intrinsical reasons, all which together amount to an unanswerable proof that the power of working miracles will continue to be exerted in the church from time to time to the end of the world.

XXXIII. The next promife made by our bleffed Saviour on this subject is mentioned in the last chapters of St Matthew and St Mark, when, before his ascension, he gave his apostles their commission to publish his gospel throughout all nations : In St Matthew it is thus related: And Jesus came and spake unto them, faying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoft; teaching them to observe all things what soever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always even to the end of the world, Matth xxviii. In St Mark feveral other circumstances not taken notice of by St Matthew are added as follows: And he faid unto them, Go ve unto all the world and preach the gofpel to every creature: He that believeth and is baptized shall be faved, and he that believeth not shall be damned; and these signs shall follow them that believe. In my

my name shall they cast out devils ; they shall speak. with new tongues, they shall take up ferpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands on the sick, and they shullrecover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them? he was received up into heaven, and fat on the right hand of God, and they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following, Mark xvi. On these two passages, which together contain a full account of the feveral particulars that happened on this occasion, we are to observe, 1mo, That our Saviour begins by affuring us, that all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, and thereby takes away all doubt of his performing whatever he promifes. 2do, He gives the apostles commisfion to teach all nations those facred truths which he had revealed to them, and absolutely requires that all nations should receive and believe these truths under pain of damnation. 3tio, To take away all grounds for complaining, as if he had not given mankind fufficient proof that thefe truths were really from him, he folemnly promifes the gift of miracles to his faithful followers, as the most undoubted proof that what they taught were the truths of God; fo that who oever should refuse to believe after such a proof should be altogether inexcufeable. 4to, He promifes to be always with his apostles in this great work to the end of the world, thereby shewing that this commission

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and these promises were not confined to the persons of the apostles who were soon to leave the world, but were made to them and their successors to the end of time. 5to, We are affored, that immediately upon the apostles' beginning to execute their commission in preaching the word, the Lord began to implement his promife, confirming their words with figns following; thereby affuring us, that he will undoubtedly perform it in its full extent as well as at the beginning. 6to, It is also here to be observed, that though the commission of teaching was directly given to the apostles, yet the promife of miracles was annexed to those that believe. The plain and natural confequence of all these observations is, that as miracles are here promifed to true believers, without any restriction of time or place, as a proof of the truth of the gofpel when taught to the nations, and as Christ's presence for affishing the pastors of his church in this great work is expressly promifed to the end of the world, and finally, as this great work will not be fully accomplished till towards the end of the world, therefore this promife of miracles will continue to be fulfilled from time to time till that peried, as often as the end for which it is here made shall require it. If now we join to this what we have faid above upon the former promise from John xiv. and what we have feen in the two first arguments of prefumptive evidence, I shall appeal to our adversaries themselves, whether it be not a manifest manifest wresting of the sacred texts, and the highest presumption to pretend to limit these divine promises to any age or period whatsoever: And if so, then miracles will continue to be performed in the church of Christ from time to time as long as the world endureth.

XXXIV. The last promises I shall take notice of on this subject, are those made on different occasions to a strong faith, and related in the different gospels: When the disciples saw the fig-tree prefently wither away upon their mafter's commanding it, they marvelled, faying, How foon is the fig-tree withered away? Jefus answered and faid unto them, Verily I fay unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, we shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but also, if you shall fay unto this mountain, Be thou removed; and be thou cast into the fea, it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive, Matth. xxi. 21. Mark xi. 23. Again, when the disciples could not cure the lunatic child, and asked their master the reason, Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard feed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you, Matth. xvii. 20. Lastly, when the apossles begged their master to increase their faith, he said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard

mustard seed, ye might say to this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the fea, and it should obey thee, Luke xvii. 6. On these texts I shall only observe, that in them we find the working of the most supenduous miracles affixed to a strong faith and considence in God, without the least infinuation of any kind of restriction or limitation, either as to time or place. As, therefore, there is not the smallest reason to imagine, that fuch faith may not be found in some holy fervant of God in all ages of the church to the end of the world; fo of course we may from thefe texts conclude, that the miraculous powers will never be withdrawn from the church in any age whatfoever, which, joined to all we have feen above, gives a new luftre and an additional ffrength to our conclusion.

XXXV. I come now to the last source of prefumptive evidence for the perpetual continuation
of miracles, taken from what we know will happen at the end of the world. We are affured
then, in the book of Revelations, that during
the dreadful times of Antichrist, the two witness
fes will appear to oppose him clothed with the
most ample power of miracles, which is thus described: If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouths and devoureth their enemies.

—These have power to shut heaven, that it rain
not in the days of their prophecy, and have power

over waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will, Rev. xi. Here then we are affured, that miracles most amazing, and in great numbers, will most certainly be performed by these defenders of the cause of God in the last age of the church: It is confelled by all, that they were performed in great abundance in the first and some following ages: There is not the smallest infinuation in the whole scripture, that the powers of performing them should, after any period of time, be taken away from the church, and at the end be restored to her again; therefore we may justly conclude, that no fuch interruption ever was, or ever will be made; and, on the contrary, with great reason we presume, that as these powers most certainly were in the church at the beginning, and undoubtedly will be at the end, fo they will never be taken from her in any interveening age, but continue to be exerted in every age, whenever the promoting the divine glory by any of the ends above mentioned shall require it. Join this presumptive argument with all the former, and let common fense decide of their combined strength and efficacy.

XXXVI. I shall now fum up all I have advanced on this head of presumptive evidence for the continuation of miracles in all ages, in the manner Mr Brook has done for those of the three first centuries, centuries, and as near as I can in his own words. Thus it will appear, I think, from the history of these extraordinary and divine powers with which the faints of God were endued in every age during the old law; from the ends for which thefe powers were given them; from the conduct of Jefus Christ during the first age of the gospel, and from the several unlimited promises of bestowing these powers upon his faithful followers, that there is a strong, yea, the strongest presumption of the continuance of miracles in the true church of Christ till the end of the world: This presumption is much heightened by confidering, that all and every one of those ends for which Almighty God wrought fuch numbers of miracles during the old law, and for which great numbers were also wrought by Christ and his apostles, in the first age of the gospel, must necessarily occur on numberless occasions in every succeeding age, and very frequently in such circumstances as render the aid of miracles for obtaining them much more necesfary than it was in those former times in which he actually wrought fuch numbers of miracles on their account.

XXXVII. Dr Middleton, and every other man who professeth himself a Christian, must allow, that miracles were wrought in great abundance, not only at the first establishment of the Mosaic institution, but on many different occasions, in every

every period during its existence: they must allow, that miracles were wrought in great abundance during the lives of the apostles, and that the Christian religion was first propagated by an extraordinary providence: Mr Brook will also allow, and has folidly proved, that the same extraordinary providence continued, and miracles were wrought in no less abundance during the first three ages of Christianity: Other Protestant authors, with equal reason, have ascertained the continuance of miracles in the church of Christ for several ages more. The question then will be, Whether we have reason to conclude, that the same extraordinary providence has continued ever fince, and will continue to the end of the world? If the probability of an event is to be determined by the likelihood of its happening, and if that thing is allowed to be likely to happen, which has frequently, and in a variety of instances, already come to pass, then it may reasonably be presumed, that if there were such frequent interpositions of the Deity for the several ends above specified, in every age during the law, and for feveral ages at the beginning of the gospel, it is likely, that in all fucceeding ages the same extraordinary interpositions should from time to time be continued in similar cases, and where the same important ends present themselves: And if to this be added, the several promifes of Christ, of bestowing the gift of miracles on his faithful followers, the reasons of these promises, the ends proposed, and the unlimited

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mited terms in which they are conceived; and laftly, what we know for certain will happen at the end of the church in this world, I dare fav every man of common fense who understands these reasons, will readily agree, that they amount not only to the greatest probability, but even to a very high degree of certainty, that the power of working miracles will never be taken from the church of Christ, but continue to be exerted on fuitable occasions by the holy servants of God in every age to the end of the world; and therefore, that, if any particular miracle in any age be properly attefted, it is most justly worthy of credit, and it would be manifest folly and obstinacy to call it in question. The nature of this attestation I now proceed to confider. can be a first the first the angle of the angle of the first of the first of

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Positive Evidence for the Continuation of MIRA-CLES throughout all preceding Ages dozun to the present Times.

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THE refult of all we have faid upon the criterion and continuation of miracles, is, that the evidence of testimony is the only natural and proper proof for the existence of miracles to those who were not eye-witnesses of them: That no metaphylical arguments, a priori, can in the smallest degree weaken the force of this evidence, when the testimony is such as it ought to be: That we have the highest presumptive evidence that the miraculous powers will be continued with the church of Christ throughout all ages to the end of the world: That there is not the fmallest weight in any of those arguments which are brought against this continuation; and, which is a necessary consequence of these truths, that if the politive tellimony for the actual existence of miracles in every age of the church down to this present time be unexceptionable, it must be the height of folly to call their existence in question. VOL. II.

II. Before

II. Before we proceed to examine the nature of this testimony, it will be proper to take notice of a piece of very unfair dealing in some of the adverfaries of the Catholic Church on this fubject; for we must distinguish three different classes of miracles with respect to the testimony on which they are founded: First, those which have no other ground but popular rumours, or mere oral tradition, without any other proof of their existence from history, authentic testimony, antient monuments, or the like. Now, on miracles of this class no stress is laid at all; for though the mere want of proper evidence is by no means an absolute proof that such miracles never did exist, vet it is a just reason for not appealing to them as proofs of the point in question, which accordingly is never done; but while they have a good moral tendency, and ferve to illustrate any point of religion, or enforce any practical duty, they are justly used for this purpose by way of parables, after the example of our bleffed Saviour himfelf in the gospel: And indeed experience teaches those who are conversant in the care of fouls, how much a well-timed example or parable of this kind ferves to influence the minds of the unlearned, and render the great truths of religion sensible and affecting to them, who would have heard the ftrongest reasons, and the warmest exhortations, without the least emotion, or even comprehending what was faid. Neither can this use of such parables be ob-- jected II. Behwe

jected to with any colour of reason, since, besides the example of Jesus Christ who authorises it, we fee, that nothing is more common, even among those who cry most out against them, than to propose moral duties for the instruction of others, by relations professedly false, by fables, novels, romances, and the like : whereas the examples and parables we fpeak of, though not attefted by pofitive proof, yet may have been true and real; and many of them undoubtedly are true; because it is well known, that numbers of extraordinary favours done to the faints of God, are studiously concealed by them out of humility, and though afterwards discovered and published by word of mouth, yet are not always properly attested so as to be an evidence to posterity; and many things too have been fully attested when they happened, though the testimony has by length of time been loft, whilft the memory of the fact once published has been preserved by oral tradition to after ages: But whatever may be faid as to this, the fact is, that miracles of this class are entirely laid aside, when the question is to prove the continuation or existence of miracles in the church, and those of the two following classes are only regarded. ents appealed to and collected a mere por

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The fecond class contains those miracles which are properly attested by judicious historians, or other writers of credit and authority, who either were eye-witnesses themselves of what they relate,

or had all access to know the truth, and published their works to the world in such circumstances as render their testimony above all suspicion.

The third class contains those miracles which have undergone the rigorous examination of the church in her processes for the canonization of saints, and have been authentically published to the world, after such examination, as true and incontessible miracles.

III. Now, right reason and common justice would require, that when the adversaries of the Catholic Church attempt to confute or ridicule her miracles, by examining any particular miracle approved by her, they thould always make choice of fome instance belonging either to the second or third class; but this piece of justice they do not always allow her; nay, we find, that two of her most declared modern adversaries, Mr Hume, in his Essay on Miracles, and Dr Campbell, in his Differtation against that Essay, have not so much as attempted to examine any one particular miracle authentically approved in the church, belonging either to the fecond or third class, but have only appealed to, and ridiculed a mere popular beanfay, and a fet of forged miracles, the forgery and fallity of which were detected and exposed by her own pastors. The reason of this conduct will eafily appear, when we consider the firm and infur-

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infurmountable force which the miracles of the fecond and third class have, and the folid grounds on which they stand, from the nature of their respective testimony, which I now proceed to consider.

this clay, are the most insenceraterally proofs of IV. In examining miracles of the second class, viz. those which are properly attested by judicious historians of credit and authority, I do not intend to make an induction of examples throughout the different ages of the church, and point out in each the strength of the testimony on which we receive them. This would lead me out to an enormous length; neither is it necessary, as it has already been done to excellent purpose by the learned author of The miraculous powers of the church, &c. in that masterly performance. I shall therefore confine myself to a general view of the nature and circumstances of that testimony, which will fully answer my purpose, and which I chiefly take from the judicious observations of that pious author. The very it would have been it were the the

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V. First, then, if we consider the characters of the persons who attest the existence of miracles in their own days throughout every age, we shall find them above all exception, viz. the holy fathers, and chief pastors of the church, men raised up by Almighty God from time to time, as the great luminaries of the Christian world, replenished

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plenished with a superabundant measure of the divine fpirit, and whose lives were spent in the most perfect exercise of all Christian virtues. The many excellent and juftly admired writings which they have left behind them, and which remain to this day, are the most unexceptionable proofs of their exquisite fense, their deep penetration, the acuteness of their judgment, and their extensive learning: The place which many of them held in the church gave them full power and opportunity to fearth into the truth of what they related, and their duty required of them to use every precaution to hinder their flock from being imposed upon by cheats and impostors. We cannot therefore doubt either of their abilities to investigate the truth, or of their diligence in doing it, much lefs can we suspect they would wilfully deceive by impoling upon the world any thing as true which they knew to be otherwise: They were Chriflians, perfect Christians, who made it their whole study to live up to the perfection of Chris flian virtue: They well knew it was absolutely unlawful to deviate from the truth for any cause whatfoever: They preached up this doctrine to their people; they have left it on record in their writings; and whenever occasion offered, they always protested their constant attachment to the truth in whatever they related. Thus St Justin Martyr declares, he would rather lese his life than fave it by a lie; Sr Sulpicius Severus,

verus, in his life of St Martin, does the fame : " I intreat those who shall read it (fays he), that they would believe what I fay, and be perfuaded that I have written nothing but what is well attested and assured; for I had rather be silent ' than tell an untruth." St Augustine also, who relates many most remarkable miracles as conflitent with his own knowledge, and of which he was an eye-witness, shows his utter abhorrence of all lies in many different parts of his writings, particularly in his book to Confentius concerning lies, where he fays, " All lies without exception are to be ex-' cluded from the doctrine of religion, and even from every proposition which is uttered concerning that doctrine in the teaching and learning of it. And let it not be imagined that there can ' possibly be any reason found for telling a lie in ' fuch matters: Since it is not justifiable to tell a ' lie about religious doctrines, even for the fake of converting a person more easily by them : For if ' the fence of truth be once broken down, or even but lightly weakened, every thing will be rendered uncertain," c. x. And this same doctrine is constantly held and professed by the whole series of those faints in all ages. Their cause was the cause of truth; they believed themselves, and laboured to convince all others, that to deviate from the known truth, or to propagate a known falsehood, is a crime for which we must account to Almighty God, by whom it will be feverely punished.

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ed. It is ridiculous then to suppose that they were capable of attefting and publishing to the world as a certain truth the smallest thing which they were confcious was a falsehood. Witnesses then of this character are above all exception, especially when we consider that they are in great numbers in different countries, and in all different ages, who give their testimony to facts that happened in the very times in which they themselves did live: " Such a general attestation of matters of fact," fays Mr Brook, fpeaking of this testimony in the three first ages, but which is perfectly applicable to every succeeding age, "Such a general attellation of matters of fact, which are in themselves unexceptionable, is ever thought authentic and substantial. Nothing indeed but the force of truth itself, and the reality of the things themselves thus related, is able to create so unanimous, fo univerfal a confent," Brook's Exam. p. 145. conjecting appropriate more captly is

VI. But the force of this univerfal testimony of such unexceptionable witnesses is vastly increased in every age, when we consider, secondly, the manner in which they give this testimony and the circumstances attending it. Under this head there are several things most worthy our attention; for, 1. They do not mention the miracles they speak of, as popular reports, or idle hearsays; they attest them as facts perfectly consistent with their own knowledge,

knowledge, of which they either were themselves eye-witnesses, or had them from such as were so: Thus Origen in his first book against Celsus declares, that the Christians in his days "drive away devils, ' perform many cures, forefee things to come, according to the will of the divine word." And a little after he adds: "I have feen many examples of this fort, and should I only set down such of ' them as were transacted in my presence, I should expose myself to the loud laughter of the unbe-' lievers, who imagine that we, like the rest whom ' they suspect of forging such things, are imposing our forgeries also upon them: But God is my witness, that my fole purpose is to recommend the religion of Jesus, not by sictitious tales, but by clear and evident facts." In like manner, the great St-Athanasius in his preface to the life of St Anthony, wherein he relates many extraordinary and miraculous effects of the divine power, declares himself thus: " The facts which I have inserted ' are partly from my own knowledge, for I often ' went to fee him, and partly from the information of one who had long attended on him; in all which I have carefully adhered to truth." And, in the course of the history itself, he relates several of these miracles done by the Saint in his own presence. So also St Paulinus relates miracles performed by St Ambrose before his own eyes; and the famous miracles wrought in Milan by the relicks of the holy martyrs Sts Gervasius and Protasi-

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us, are related both by St Ambrofe and St Augus, tine, as facts of which they themselves were eye-witnesses, as well as thousands of others, See St Ambr. Ep. 2. ad Sororem Marcellin. et St. Aug. Confef. I. o. c. 7. St Chryfostom, speaking of the fign of the cross, fays: "This sign, both in the days of our fathers, and in our own, has thrown open. gates that were shut, destroyed the effects of poisonous drugs, disfolved the force of hemlock, and cured the bites of venomous beafts," T. 7. p. 552. St Paulinus has celebrated, both in profe and verse, many miracles performed by the relicks of Sr Felix the martyr; and, poem 23. he declares that many of them were actually performed in his own presence. St Augustine, in his excellent work on the city of God, relates a great many most extraordinary miracles, done in his own time, and before his own eyes, at which, fays he, nos interfuimus et oculis aspeximus nostris: " I myself was present, " and beheld with my own eyes;" and coming to the famous cure of two perfons at the fl rine of St Stephen, he gives a most circumstantial account of it as having been performed before the whole people, and fays, "It is to notorious and fo celebrated, that I do not think there is one of all the inhabitants of Hippo who did not fee it, or hath not been ' informed of it; nor one that can ever forget it." Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, declares himself to have been eye-witness to several miracles wrought by the holy monks of his time: He was intimately . MI

ly acquainted with many of them, and has transmitted to posterity a circumstantial account of the wonderful works which God performed by their means: And speaking of St Simeon Stylites, I myfelf, fays he, faw another most celebrated miracle. which he goes on to relate in the cure of a fick man; and adds, I was not only a spectator of his miracles, I was also a hearer of his predictions; feveral instances of which, and their full accomplishment, he describes. Æneas of Gaza, in his dialogue betwixt Theophrastus and Aritheus, speaking of the African confessors, whose tongues had been cut out at the roots by the Arians, but who miraculously retained the perfect faculty of their fpeech, fays, " I myfelf faw thefe men, and heard ' them talk, and was aftonished they could speak ' fo articulately; I looked for the organ of speech, and, not trusting my ears, I examined the matter with my eyes, and having opened their mouths, faw that their tongues were entirely cut away, root and all. Upon which I was amazed, ' not only that they could speak, but even that ' they had not expired in the execution." Procopius also attests that he had seen them at Constantinople. The same language we find in every age by those who attest these matters; but as it would run out to too great a length to collect all, I shall conclude with Geoffroy, one of St Bernard's disciples, who writes his life, and declares, "I was present at almost all the transactions I relate: fome

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fome few things, to which I was not an eye-wite ness have been attested to me by brethren, on " whose veracity I can depend." But, 2. What makes this declaration still more worthy of credit is, that they often call God himself to witness the truth of what they attest: This we have seen above was done by Origen; so also Palladius, in his history of the fathers of the defart, relates numbers of miracles performed by these great Saints, not only, from the report of credible witnesses, but from his own certain knowledge, declaring that he had feen these wonderful works himself, and assures us that, by the grace of God, he tells the truth. St Sulpicius Severus was a learned and holy priest, who wrote the life of that great prelate St Martin of Tours, in which numbers of great miracles wrought by the Saint are related, and in the beginning of it, he fays: " I intreat those who shall read it, that they would believe what I fay, and be perfuaded that I have written nothing but what is well attested and assured; for I had rather be silent than tell an untruth;" and in the fifth chapter he declares that he would esteem it a crime to tell a lie in favour of St Martin; and calls Christ to witness that he has related nothing but what he had either feen himself or received from known witnesses, and for the most part from St Martin himself. The fixth book of the life of St Bernard, written by his disciple Geoffroy, is an attefted narrative of a number of miracles wrought by

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by the Saint in different places, supported by unexceptionable witnesses, the bishop of Constance, his chaplain, two abbots, two monks, and three clergymen, who accompanied the Saint, and day by day attested and fet their names to what they were eye-witnesses of, and in their attestation they exprefs themselves thus: "We that were present have judged it necessary to specify the miracles as well to avoid confusion as to avoid all doubt: we have each of us figned our names, and do ' folemnly attest what we have seen and heard." To mention one instance more: In the fourteenth century lived St Catherine of Sienna, remarkable for the many miracles God wrought by her means: Her confessarius F. Raymond, general of the order of the Dominicans, wrote her life, with which he was well acquainted, and candidly acknowleges that for a long time he doubted of the reality of those heavenly things he saw in her; till having maturely examined them, and experienced in himfelf the wonderful efficacy of her prayers, he was fully fatisfied, and therefore in the presence of God avers the truth of what he relates. What confirms still more the veracity of this their testimony is, 3. That they often appeal to their very enemies themselves for the truth of what they attest, as a thing notorious and perfectly confiftent with their knowledge: Thus St Justin Martyr, in his fecond apology to the Roman Senate, fays, "This ' you may understand by what happens before your Vol. II. \mathbf{Z}

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own eyes: For many persons possessed with devils, through the whole world, and in this very city, have been delivered, and are even now de-Iivered by feveral of our Christians adjuring them in the name of Jesus Christ." So also Tertullian challenges the Heathen magistrates "to ' call before their tribunals any person manifestly opossessed with a devil; and if the evil spirit, when exorcifed by any Christian whatsoever. did not own himself to be a devil, as truly as in other places he would falfely call himself a God -not daring to tell a lie to a Christian: that then they should take the life of that Christian. And what is more manifest, says he, than this work? what more convincing than this proof?" Apol. c. 23. St Jerom also writing against Vigilantius, who denied that any veneration was due to the relicks of the martyrs, appeals to the very miracles done by these relicks, as evident and manifest proofs against that heretic: "Answer " me (fays he), how comes it to pass that in this ' vile dust and ashes, as you call them, of the martyrs, there is fo great a manifestation of figns and miracles?" Again, 4. In feveral cases this testimony for the existence of miracles, and the miracles themselves, have been examined, and all opposition made against them at the very time they happened by the adversaries of the Catholic faith, but which had no other effect than to establish them the more firmly: Thus the famous miracles

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at Milan wrought by the relicks of the two holy martyrs Sts Gervasius and Protasius, had such influence on the minds of the people as greatly to alarm the Arians; for which reason no stone was left unturned to discredit them as impostures, as well by the lies and mifreprefentations of those heretics, as by the interest of the court, then residing in that city : But all to no purpose ; the people knew what they had feen with their own eyes; the notoriety of what was done prevailed over all thefe contrivances; and in spite of all the rage of the Empress and her party, gave a check to the perfecution against the Catholics. See St Ambr. Ep. 2. ad Marcellinam. In like manner, in the Arian perfecution in Africa, under Hunnerick King of the Vandals, we have the celebrated miracle of restoring sight to a blind man, before the whole people, by Eugenius bishop of Carthage, which is related at large by St Victor bishop of Vite, in his history of this persecution. This made so great a noise, "that the news (fays St Victor) was foon ' carried to Hunnerick; the man was apprehended, and questioned about all that had happened. and the recovery of his fight. He gave a faith-' ful account of every circumstance: Whereby the Arian bishops were put to the number confufion. The reality of the miracle could not be ' denied, for Felix (the blind man) was known to ' the whole city." Again, 5. The time and manner in which this their testimony was published to uf tog Za

the world, is another convincing proof of their veracity in giving it; for they do not publish their accounts of the miracles they relate, as of things that happened long ago, or in different parts of the world, but as facts performed at the very time, and in the very place where they mention them, and as well known to the very people to whom they publish them. Several examples of this we fee in those brought above; as of St Augustine in his City of God, where, b. 22. cap. 8. he fays, "even at this time miracles are wrought in the name of Jefus, as well by his facraments as by the prayers and memorials of his faints. The cure of the blind man at Milan, was done in the presence of a vast concourse of people who were there affembled at the bodies of the martyrs Gerva-"fins and Protains." A little after, he adds, There was one miracle wrought among us, fo inotorious and fo celebrated, that I do not think there is one of all the inhabitants of Hippo who did not fee it, or hath not been informed of it;" and then goes on to relate it. Now this relation he published in Hippo to that very people before whom he avers the miracle was performed: Must he not have been a madman to have done this, if what he related had never existed? In like manner, Theodoret published the life and wonderful miraracles of St Simeon Stylites, while the Saint was living, and thousands were alive who had been eye-witnesses of what he related, so that it is impossible

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possible he could have escaped detection, if what he related had not been literally true. When St Victor bishop of Vite published to the world his history of the African confessors, whose tongues had been cut out by Hunnerick, and who yet retained the perfect use of their speech, he says, "If ' any man makes a difficulty in believing this, let ' him go to Constantinople, and there he may fee one of them, Reparatus by name, a sub-deacon, who speaks perfectly, and is highly esteemed by ' all in the palace of the emperor Zeno." Must not this author have been more than mad, or could he ever have escaped being detected for an impostor had this relation been a fiction? Laftly, The life of St Bernard was wrote by one of his own disciples, and published soon after his death, while thousands of people were living, who, if there had been any forgery in the miracles there related. must have had it in their power to detect the fraud. to the utter confusion of the publishers. I cannot help adding here, 6. two examples a-kin to the last mentioned, to wit, of St Cyril of Jerusalem, and of St Gregory the Great: The former, in his homis ly preached to his people on the paralytick, declares publicly, as a thing well known among them, that the gifts of prophecy, of healing the fick, and of casting out devils, were granted at that time to some of the faithful at Jerusalem; and he there publicly exhorts those, on whom these graces were bestowed, to be humble, and to repress

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press all thoughts of pride and vanity that might arise in their breasts on their account: Now how ridiculous would all this be if his hearers had not perfectly well known the truth of what he thus afferted? In like manner, St Gregory the Great writes to St Augustine, apostle of the English, exhorting him to be humble, and not to let his mind be elated by the many miracles God was pleafed to work by his hands for the conversion of that people, which would have been highly inconsistent, and exposing himself to the just censure of the world, if these miracles had never existed. To these I may also add St Chrysostom, though more properly belonging to the former class, who, in his discourse 32. Tom. 7. mentions it to his hearers as a thing well known and notorious among them, that many had been healed of their diffempers by anointing themselves with oil taken from the lamps that were kept burning before the relicks of the martyrs. Now, from all these considerations it is evident beyond dispute that the manner in which this testimony is given, and the circumstances attending it, are fuch as take away every fuspicion of imposture, and give the highest lustre and energy to the attestation so delivered.

VII. The nature of the miraculous facts attested is, thirdly, another great proof of the truth of the testimony given to their existence; for these were by no means dubious, hidden or abstruse mat-

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ters, that could be fit subjects for juggling tricks, and easily imposed on the people, as our adversaries infinuate, but palpable, plain, open sacts, of which the most illiterate person who could see or hear was a perfectly competent judge; namely giving sight to the blind, dispossessing devils, curing the sick, raising the dead to life, and such like. There is no need of being a learned philosopher to prevent our being deceived in the exhibition of such things before us; the simplest clown is as capable to discern the truth in such cases as those of the greatest learning.

is appeared admirately effect that have produced

VIII. Fourthly, The effects produced by these miracles is another glorious proof of their reality, and that the attellation given of them is true. These effects are chiefly three, 1. The conversion of heretics. Thus the great numbers of Arians converted by the miracles which were wrought by the relicks of the martyrs of Milan, and the multitude of Henricians about Thoulonfe and other places, converted by the miracles of St Bernard, are most undeniable proofs of the reality of those miracles by which this was brought about. And this proof is the more cogent, because it is well known how obffinate and inveterate thefe herefies were, and how attentive their abettors to lay hold of every thing against the Catholic Church: Hence we may fairly conclude, that had not these miracles been true, and even notorious beyond

beyond all dispute, instead of converting such numbers of those poor fouls, they could never have escaped the censure of so clear-sighted adversaries. but would have rather confirmed them in their errors, and been turned by them into an occasion of ridicule, and ferved only to the confusion of those who pretended to prove the Catholic doctrine by them. The fame is to be faid of the miracles of St Dominic, in converting numbers of the Albigenses, and of several others too tedious to mention. 2. The conversion of sinners to a holy life of penance and piety, by means of miracles, is another admirable effect they have produced, and a most undoubted proof of the reality of their existence. Every one knows how difficult a matter it is to change the heart of obstinate sinners, habituated to vice and fenfuality; nothing less than the Almighty hand of God is able to perform this, especially to do it thoroughly and instantaneoufly. Miracles are doubtless the most powerful and best adapted external means to convince such finners of what God requires from them, and of their imminent danger if they continued rebellious to his will; and God himself, in Pharaoh, and other fuch examples in holy scripture, used them for this very purpose. When, therefore, such conversions, instantaneous and perfect, are notoriously known as the consequences of miracles attested to have been wrought for that very purpose, this effect produced by them is a most conharred vincing

vincing proof of the real existence of the cause which produced it. A most remarkable instance of this we have in the life of St Bernard, in the conversion of the duke of Guienne, by the miracles of that holy servant of God, which, with others of the like nature, I omit relating, for brevity's fake. 3. The conversion of Heathen nations to the Christian faith is another glorious effect, of miracles, and an incontestible proof of their existence. That Heathen nations have in all ages been converted to the faith of Christ, is a fact never called in question: That miracles were a proper, adequate, and well adapted means to produce this effect, will not be denied: That we might reasonably expect them from a good God on fuch an important occasion, is what the most violent adversaries cannot refuse. Seeing, therefore, the histories of all these converted nations do folemnly attest, that many miracles were wrought by those holy saints who converted them, and their conversion itself a notorious fact, is expressly declared to have been the effect of these miracles; the certainty and notoriety of the effect gives the most convincing proof of the existence of the cause from whence it proceeded, and adds an insuperable force to that testimony by which that existence is attested. And here we may very fitly subjoin the observation of St Augustine, that confidering the nature of the Christian religion both as to faith and morals, the opposition it must

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must needs meet with on both these accounts from the corruption of our hearts, and our perverse inclinations, especially when these have been confirmed by habit and continual indulgence, as is the case in all Heathen nations before their conversion, the popular prejudices, and numberless difficulties it has everywhere to struggle with when it makes its first appearance in any country; confidering, I fay, all thefe things, it feems impossible it should ever gain ground, and be planted in any nation, without the help of miracles; or if at any time this should happen, this same would be a greater miracle than any of those which are related upon any fuch occasion; because the conversion of any Heathen nation to the faith of Christ without the help of miracles, would be a most supernatural effect produced in the hearts of every one converted, by the immediate operation of the power of God, without the use of any external means adequate to the effect produced. What Dr Campbell beautifully observes of the miracles of the apostles, and the effects produced by them in the conversion of the Heathen world, may justly be used here, and is entirely applicable to the fame or fimilar effects in converting Heathens, heretics, or finners in all after-ages. "The very pretext of supporting the doctrine by ' miracles (fays the Doctor), if a falle pretext, would of necessity do unspeakable hurt to the cause. The pretence of miracles will quickly attract

attract the attention of all to whom the new (or the disputed) doctrine is published. The influence which address and eloquence, appearances of fanctity, and fervours of devotion would otherwise have had, however great, would be fu-' perfeded by the confideration of what is infinite-' ly more striking and decisive. The miracles. therefore, will first be canvassed, and canvassed with a temper of mind the most unfavourable to conviction." Differt. P. 11. 6. 1. Confequently, if, after fuch canvassing, the adversaries yield the day, Heathens become Christians, heretics rejoin the Catholic faith, detefting their former errors, and finners are converted to a penitential and virtuous life; these effects are plainly the most convincing proofs that the reality of the miracles had stood the test of the strictest scrutiny, and triumphed over all opposition. ne richitic and motor

IX. To these more remarkable effects produced by miracles, which serve as so many convincing proofs of their existence, and of the truth of that testimony by which their existence is supported, we may also subjoin two others, which, if not properly effects directly produced by miracles, are such natural consequences of them as necessarily presuppose the reality of their existence. The first is the erection of public monuments in memory of the miracles performed. When any public monument actually exists, when antient historians living

ving on the fpot at the very time of its erection. give an account of the fast which gave occasion to it, thefe two together are an irrefragable proof of the existence of that fact; because, should the historian give a false account, and publish that at the time and place where the monument is erected, he must either be a fool or a madman, and it is evidently impossible he should escape detection. New, many fuch public monuments are to be found in the Catholic church, as proofs of the reality of those miracles for which they were erected. The fecond is the pitiful shifts that the adverfaries of the Catholic faith have been reduced to, in order to evade the force of these miracles which have been urged against them, particularly their attributing them to imposture or art magic; for fuch evalions as these plainly show, that even those very adversaries were convinced of the reality of the facts, which being public and notorious, they had not confidence to deny or call in question; and therefore found themselves reduced to the above evalions, to elude the force which these miracles had against them and their false doctrines. And it is observable, that this is no uncommon retreat of the adversaries of the Catholic faith; Ofiander, that celebrated father of the reformation, not being able to doubt of the miracles performed by St Bernard, fays, they were Satan's workmanship for the confirmation of idolatry and false worship. Epit. Centur. P. 310. Whitaker,

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taker, in his answer to Bellarmine, acknowledging the existence of those miracles urged against him by that learned cardinal, attributes them to the devil. The devil, fays he, might preferve the body of Xavier for a short time odoriferous and incorrupt. Lib. de Eccles. P. 354. So Calvin, in the preface to his Institutions, and the centuriators of Magdeburgh, relating miracles in every century of the church, convinced as they were of the facts, openly impute them to Satan. In like manner the Arians and Heathens, as St Ambrose informs us, pretended that the miracles performed by the bodies of St Gervafe and St Protafe, were wrought by the devil, on purpose to delude the Christians. Celfus alfo, and Julian, thefe two inveterate pagan adversaries of Christianity, attributed all the miracles wrought at the establishment of the Christian religion to the same cause; and all these enemies of the truth, and of true miracles, only followed the example of the Pharifees, their fathers and predecessors in this cause, who said of the miracles of Christ himself, that he cast out dewils through Beelzebub the prince of the devils, Matth. xii. 24. But this evafion is a clear proof, that those who use it were convinced of the reality of the facts, which they could not deny, as is justly observed by the learned Protestant author of the observations on the conversion of St Paul. P. 101. where he fays, "To impute miracles to magic is by no means agreeable to the no-Vol. II. Aa

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tions of those who in this age difbelieve Christis anity. It will therefore be needless to show the weakness of that supposition; but that supposi-' tion itself is no inconsiderable argument of the truth of the facts. Next to the apostles and ' evangelists, the strongest witnesses of the unde-' niable force of that truth are Celfus and Julian. and other antient opponents of the Christian ' religion," (and we may add, Osiander, Whitaker, Calvin, and others fuch, as equally strong witnesses of the miracles of the later ages), "who were obliged to folve what they could not contradict, by fuch an irrational and abfurd imagination." And indeed the absurdity of this imagination will readily appear, from the third and fourth rules of the criterion above laid down, for distinguishing whether miracles be from God or from Satan, to which I refer my reader for full fatisfaction. No Lore Trades Bela Sympathics of

X. Let now any man of common sense seriously consider all these circumstances attending the testimony given in every age in attestation of miracles, and let him fay, if he thinks it, I don't fay probable, but even morally possible, that such testimony can be false. And indeed, were it possible for fuch testimony to deceive us with regard to the existence of miracles, how could we reasonably believe any one fact that happened before our own days, or of which we have not been eyeauhi-

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witnesses ourselves? But we need not argue much upon this point: the testimony for the continuation of miracles in every age fince the apostles, is fo full, fo perfect, and fo every way folid and wellfounded, that two of the greatest and most inveterate adversaries that have ever appeared against miracles, have been forced to acknowledge it; and for that very reason childishly refuse to trust the issue of the cause upon that foundation. These two adversaries are the celebrated Dr Middleton and Mr Hume: " There is not a fingle point in all history," fays the Doctor, " fo constantly, explicitely, and unanimously affirmed by them all (church historians), as the continual fuccesfion of those (miraculous) powers through all ages, from the earliest father who first mentions them, down to the time of the reformation, which fame succession is still farther deduced by persons of the most eminent character for their ' probity, learning, and dignity in the Romish church to this very day." Pref. to Ing. Such is the character the Doctor gives of the testimony for the existence of miracles in all ages, which furely nothing but the force of truth could extort from him; but seeing it would be impossible and ridiculous to deny the continuation of miracles if tried by this teltimony, he fets out with this determined resolution, to reject all miracles after the apostolic age, and never so much as bring one of them to the test of this examination, because, " If Commission of

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the cause (says he) must be tried by the unanimous confent of fathers, we shall find as much reason to believe those powers were continued even to the latest ages, as to any other, how early and primitive foever, after the days of the apostles." Bid. See more to this purpose above. And as for Mr Hume, he expressly recommends to his readers, to form a general refolution never to lend any attention to the testimony (for miracles in favours of religion), with whatever fpecious pretext it may be covered. And he affigns this plain reason, because, says he, Those who are to filly as to examine the affair by that medium, and feek particular flaws in the testimony, are almost fure to be confounded. Esf. on Mir. as cited by Dr Campbell, Differt. P. 60, 61, This is plaindealing with a witness; and the most authentic attestation from the mouth of a declared enemy. that the positive testimony for the perpetual continuation of miracles in all preceding ages of the church, is fo absolute, fo complete, and so wellfounded, that it is impossible to find the smallest flaw in it even by the clear-fighted David Hume himfelf, notwithstanding the acuteness of his genius, and the ardent defire of his heart to find riccilous to ceny the continuition of miracland nied by yills rentimony, he fets our with this ale

XI. The natural and necessary conclusion from all these observations and reasonings is, "That the existence of miracles of the second class above mentioned,

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mentioned, viz. those attested by judicious historians, or other writers of credit and authority in every age, is founded on such an ample, full, and perfect politive tellimony, as exceeds any othen historical fact what soever, according to Dr ! Middleton, and that no possible flaw can be found in it, according to Mr Hume; consequently, that no man in his fober fenses can call their existence in question, without destroying all historical faith whatfoever, and without acting in direct opposition to one of the essential principles of the human mind, which obliges us to vield our affent to that conviction which a full and unexception-' able testimony necessarily carries along with it in matters of fact, either past or at a distance, ' as Dr Beattie proves at large in his Essay on " Truth."

XII. I shall conclude this subject by the testimonies of two other celebrated Protestants, who, from the force of the continual attestation of miracles in every age, were thoroughly convinced of the reality of their existence down to their own days, and whose authority ought certainly to have very great weight with every true child of the reformation. The first is Luther himself, the great apostle of the reformation, who in his book on the Jews, Tom. vii. Wittemb. P. 209. says, "Thro' the course of sisteen hundred yearspast, the Jews have heard that there is the word of God, A a 3

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have feen the greatest figns and wonders, and have raged against them. And a little after he adds, speaking of the Christian faith, "From God we have learned and received it, as the eternal word and truth of God, confessed and confirmed by miracles and figns during thefe fifteen hundred years to this present time." Nay, what is still more to our purpose, in his book De Purgatione quorundum articulorum, he even attelts miracles wrought in his own time at the shrines of faints, and attelts it as a thing fo notorious and evident, that it can admit of no doubt. Who can gainfay thefe things, fays he, which God to this day worketh miraculoufly at the tombs of the faints? Ad Divorum Sepulchra. The other testimony I shall bring is of the learned Grotius, whose abilities as a scholar and a judicious critic are justly admired by the world: This great man, upon these words of our Saviour, Thefe figns shall follow those that believe, declares himself thus : " As the later ages also are full of testimonies of the same thing, I don't know by what reason some are · moved to reftrain that gift to the first ages only; · wherefore, if any one would even now preach * Christ in a manner agreeable to him, to nations that know him not, I make no doubt but the force of the promife will ftill remain." I shall make no further observation on these two respectable witnesses than only this, that the force of this truth must be exceeding great, which obliges peo-SVAH

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ple, even against the interest of their own cause, to acknowledge it; and that the only reason which moved others afterwards to deny it is, not the love of truth, nor any new light they had got unknown to those before them, but the mise-rable necessity of their cause, which, as Dr Middleton fairly acknowledges, forced them into this sad alternative, either absolutely to reject the continuation of miracles in the Christian church, in spite of all the strong and unexceptionable evidence to the contrary, or fairly to give up the reformation as the work of Satan, and yield the day to the Catholic church.

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XIII. We now proceed to confider the third chass of miracles, according to the division given above, to wit, fuch as have undergone the examination of the church in her processes for the canonization of faints, and are published to the world as true under the fanction of her authority in confequence of fuch examination; and here we shall find fuch precautions taken for afcertaining the truth of those miracles which are so approved, as render it morally impossible for deceit or fraud, or even mistake to enter. It is a common calumny frequently thrown out against the church, that her pastors have an interest in promoting the belief of miracles, that they therefore encourage forgeries and impolitions of this kind, that having the power in their hand they hinder all proper examination

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of such as appear among them; in a word, that they promote every impollure in this matter, and discourage all means of detection. The futility of this calumny is next to felf-evident, on many accounts; for what man of common fense will ever believe that fuch numbers of holy, pious, and learned men in every age, should be all fo loft to every fense of virtue and honesty, and of so proffituted consciences, as to promote and encourage an imposture of this kind; and that not one or two, but as many impostures and impositions upon mankind as there are miracles received and approved by the Catholic church; especially if it be added that these very men openly profess it to be a facred article of their faith, that it is a damnable fin to promote or propagate falsehoods in matters of religion, or to propose a false object of veneration to the Christian people? Who, in his fober fenses, could perfuade himfelf, that in fo many ages, in fuch different countries, in fuch vast numbers of people as must be concerned in this matter, not one should ever be found of such common honesty as to discover the fraud, and undeceive his fellow creatures? whence comes it that of fuch vast numbers as have apostatized from the Catholic church. and who, by their conduct on that occasion, have evidently shown they wanted neither the will nor the means for making fuch a discovery, have, this notwithstanding, never yet been able to make out the charge? The reason is plain, because the accufation

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cufation is not only false and groundless, but diametrically opposite to the whole tenor of the church's conduct in this matter. Far from encouraging any impostor of this kind, she punishes them most severely when the discovers them, and uses every means in her power, the strictest and most rigorous that human wisdom could devise, in order to prevent them, and to preferve her children from every fuspicion of fraud in things of so great importance for their spiritual welfare; and we find, that this has not only been her constant care, even from the very earliest ages, but that in these later times, instead of remitting any thing of her primitive vigilance and fervour, she has greatly increased it; and uses much greater strictness and rigour for fome ages past in these matters than she was wont to do in times of old.

XIV. The great heroes of Christianity, those blessed martyrs who laid down their lives in the midst of torments, with the most heroic constancy, for the sake of Jesus Christ, were, on that account, entitled at their death, according to his promises, to an immediate admission to his glory. Accordingly we find from the unanimous and most authentic records of antiquity, that the greatest honours were paid to them, after their deaths, by the Christian world; the faithful assembled in crowds at their martyrdoms to be witnesses of their glorious victories; they gathered up their venerable remains

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mains with the greatest ardour; they assembled afterwards every year at their facred sepulchres to celebrate the day of their triumph; the history of their confession and martyrdom was publickly read at their meetings for the instruction and encouragement of the faithful, and their acts were communicated to the most distant churches for their mutual comfort and edification. See the letter of the church of Smyrna to that of Philadelphia, giving an account of the martyrdom of their holy bishop St Polycarp, and of the behaviour of the faithful upon that occasion. We find, however, from the fame antient records, that it was not fufficient to have fuffered martyrdom to entitle one immediately to these facred honours; it was further required, that their martyrdom should be publicly recognized and acknowledged by the chief pastors of the church; it was the province of these pastors to judge whether the person was to be esteemed a real martyr or not: whether there was just grounds to believe he was in possession of eternal blifs, and confequently whether or not the honours given to martyrs were due to him; this was even in those early ages thought necessary to prevent impostures, and preferve the too easy multitude from being carried away by appearances; hence came the distinction of approved martyrs, martyres vindicati, and those who were not so; and to give to these last the honours due only to the former, was always effected a crime, and as COLLOR fuch

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fuch feverely punished by the church; of which there is a striking example in the famous Lucilla of Carthage, who took fo much amis her being reprimanded for this crime, as to become one of the great causes and promoters of the Donatist schism. It was some time before these holy servants of God, who died in peace, after spending their days in the rigours of penance, or in the heroic practice of Christian virtues, were admitted to the same honours after their deaths as were given to the martyrs; and it was necessary, that besides the fanctity of their lives, unquestionable proofs of their being in possession of God in heaven should appear, before these honours were given them. Miracles wrought by Almighty God on having recourse to their prayers, or by applying their facred relicks, or the like, were unanimously received as the most undoubted, and indeed the only certain proofs of their felicity; because, though the fanctity of their lives is the great foundation of their glory in heaven, if they perfevered therein to the end, yet however incontestible the proofs of their fanctity may be, their perseverance cannot be so certainly known, except heaven itself speak in their favours after their death, and attest their felicity by miracles: Hence miracles are always confidered as a most necessary condition in the canonization of faints, even of martyrs themselves, as being the only affured proofs of their having perfevered to their tangement bight

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the last in these holy dispositions, which alone could entitle them to heavenly glory.

XV. Now, the taking cognizance of miracles for this end has always been the province of the chief pastors of the church, who have ever looked upon it as an affair which required the most mature deliberation and the greatest circumspection; particularly in the [e later ages, in which the examination of these matters has been, by the whole church, unanimously referred to the judgment of the bishops of Rome, who have thereupon thought proper to redouble their vigilance, and increase the strictness of the examinations that were wont to be observed in former ages. We have a remarkable example of this about the year 1220, in the letter of Honorius HI. addressed to the general chapter of the Ciftercian order, and the bishop of the place, wherein he narrates : " That many f bishops and religious persons, together with the fabbot and convent of St Mauritius, had fome time before given him an account of numbers of f miracles wrought by the intercession of their late holy abbot Mauritius, and of the constant and general opinion which all that country had of his fanctity, and therefore had intreated him to have 'him canonized; that in confequence of this apf plication, he had fent a commission to the bishop of Lyons and the abbot of St Loup, to make a juridical examination of these miracles, and of " the

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the life of the holy abbot, in order to have a just and folid ground for granting the request; that these commissioners had indeed sent him a list of many great miracles, faid to be wrought by God through the merits of the holy abbot, and attested upon oath by feveral witnesses; but as it did onot appear by the account fent him that the commissioners had examined the witnesses severally upon the subjects and circumstances of their ' attestations, with that care and diligence requifite in an affair of fuch importance, that therefore he could not proceed upon their information, and ordered the faid general chapter and the diocesan bishop to cause the witnesses to be ' re-examined separately, with that care and diligence which is wont and ought to be used in ' fuch matters." This is the fubstance of his Holiness's rescript, as narrated in Decret. lib. 2. tit. 20. cap. Venerabili de Testib. et Attestat. From which it evidently appears how scrupulous the Holy See was even in these middle ages, (wherein the adversaries of the Catholic church pretend so many corruptions, especially with regard to miracles, crept in) of admitting any thing of this kind as true, but upon the strictest scrutiny, and the most incontestable evidence which the nature of the thing could bear.

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XVI. After the death of St Francis of Affifium, great numbers of miracles were faid to be Vol. II. Bb wrought

wrought by his intercession; upon which Pope Gregory IX. ordered a strict examination to be made of them; and that he might proceed with the greatest caution, he commissioned some cardinals to prefide in this fcrutiny, whom he knew to be least favourable to the cause: Accordingly the affair was discussed with all possible diligence, and the miracles were found to be fo indifputably true, that it was refolved to proceed to his canonization two years after his death. The fame attention was used by the same Pope in examining the miracles wrought by St Anthony of Padua, which were thereupon found to be fo certain, fo great and numerous, that he was canonized the very year after. About the beginning of the fifteenth century flourished that most wonderful man St Vincent Ferrerius, after whose death the ftrictest enquiry was made of the miracles wrought by his intercession; and by the process of his canonization by Pope Calixtus III. it appears, that upwards of eight hundred miracles had been proved to be wrought by him, and this proof fupported by the most convincing testimonies.

XVII. But nothing will give us a better idea of the caution used by the Holy See in these matters, than the following extract of the decree of Pope Nicolas V. for the canonization of St Bernardin of Sienna, in the year 1450, six years after his death: " In the time of our predecessor Eugenius IV. so

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many miracles were reported to have been done by the merits and intercession of St Bernardin, that the most pressing folicitations were made to the Apostolic See to have the reality of those miracles inquired into with proper care, to the end that, after the truth was manifested, due honour might be paid by the church militant on earth, to him who was proved, by the testimony of God, to reign in glory in the church triumphant in heaven. Our predecessor did what was requifite in a matter of fo great importance, and, according to the custom of the Apostolic See, intrusted the business to three cardinals of the holy Roman church, who were empowered to fend two venerable bishops, with commission to make the most exact refearches in order to discover the truth. And having fpent fome months in this work, they returned to Rome, and gave a faithful account of what they found-But our predecessor being taken out of the world before that business was ended; and folicitations being made to us to have it refumed, we refolved to proceed with the utmost care and circumspection. Therefore we appointed three cardinals of the holy Roman church, to fend two venerable bi-' shops a second time to inquire into the truth, ' that so we might proceed with more security after this repeated fearch. Accordingly they fent two bishops, who, at their return, did not only confirm what had been discovered in the B b 2 ' time

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' time of our predecessor, but also brought attestations of feveral evident miracles which had been wrought fince that time: Nevertheless, we did not let this fecond inquiry suffice, but resolved to make a third, and therefore fent two other venerable bishops, who, after some months, returned with the most convincing proofs that miracles were frequently wrought; and in particular, they brought an exact narrative of fome of the most remarkable ones. After this we fent another bishop to Sienna, who, having staid there some months, bore witness at his return to the truth ' and reality of the miracles. We fent the fame venerable person also to Aquila, where the Saint died, to inquire whether any miracles were ' wrought there: At his return he confirmed the ' attestations of others who had been sent before ' to the same place, and moreover related the most flupenduous works which had been done fince the time of the inquiry made by those others; which stupenduous works were done not in cor-' ners and hidden places, but publicly, and in the ' fight of the whole multitude. Having received these informations, we caused every particular to be laid open in our confiftory, where they were examined. But the matter being of great ' importance, the determination was put off till another confiftory should be held, that so each cardinal might, in the mean time, examine every article more maturely at home. In this · fecond

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fecond confiftory all the votes concurred in this, that the miracles were fo many, and so very evident, and the fanctity of the Saint's life, and the purity of his faith, so manifest, that there was reafon sufficient to proceed to the canonization,"

XVIII. Let it now be remembered that all these steps were taken, and this decree published within the space of only fix years after the Saint's death, and in the country where the whole was transacted, at which time every particular must have been perfectly well known to all the world, and recent in every body's mind: Let me then alk any man of common fense, Whether he thinks it possible to use greater caution in investigating the truth than was here done? or that fuch inveltigation as this could be deceived in afcertaining the truth of public and notorious facts? or, that had any falfehood been advanced in the decree, it could have escaped detection, considering the time, place, and other circumstances in which it was published to the world?

XIX. These several examples, then, which I have brought, show plainly how very far it is from the design or intention of the pastors of the church to impose false relations or forged miracles upon her children; nay, how scrupulously careful they are not to advance or approve any thing of this

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kind, till by the most mature and repeated examinations they have acquired the most undoubted proofs of the truth. All which will still farther appear by the regulations of the council of Trent. and the improvements made in the rigour of these investigations fince that period, by which the fovereign Pontiff now regulates his conduct in thefe refearches. The bishops assembled in that council, among their many other wife and prudent regulations, did not let the examination of miracles escape their attention. They were fensible that abuses might creep in among the simple people, and false or supposititions miracles might, in particular places that were more remote from the means of detection, be handed about and believed among them, if not properly prevented. Wherefore, following the example of former ages, they made a decree, by which they not only confirm to the chief paftors of the church the right of examining any new miracles, and of the rejecting or approving them as they thould fee cause, but also strictly forbid any new miracle to be admitted till it be properly examined and approved by the diocesan bishop; the words of the decree are as follows: The hely fynod decrees-also that no new miracles-shall be be admitted without the previous examination and approbation of the faid bishop, who, when he is arrived at any certainty about them, may, with the advice of divines and other pious persons, do what he shall judge agreeable to truth and tiety, Seff. 25. Decr.

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Decr. de Invoc. et Vener. Sanct. This wife regulation effectually discourages all forgeries and impostures; for as these can never stand the test of a judicial examination, so without that they can never make great progress in deceiving, nor have any public weight or authority in the church.

XX. Though no other diligence had been used for afcertaining the reality of miracles than what we have feen above, yet it must be owned that these were very fufficient to convince any reasonable perfon of the certainty of facts fo examined and attested. Repeated examinations by different commissioners, who were men of known learning and probity, made at different times, of witnesses upon oath, concerning facts of their own nature, open, plain, and notorious, faid to be performed in the presence of multitudes of people of all ranks and stations, and these examinations made at or soon after the time when the facts were faid to have happened, and when numbers of eye and ear-witneffes were alive, and every thing recent in their memories, and the process and result of these examinations tried with the most mature deliberation by a body of learned and indifferent persons, and, when approved by them, published to the world among these very people, and in these very places where the whole was transacted, and where it was imposfible that any fraud advanced should escape detection; all these circumstances concurring are doubt-

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less fuch assured means of ascertaining the facts so examined and attefted, that it scarce appears possible any thing more could be added for giving to the human mind the most assured conviction; and vet we find that the church, from her ardent defire of rendering these matters absolutely incontestable, and of precluding every possible cavil of her enemies, has, even in these later times, added more precautions, and in her processes for the canonization of faints uses still greater rigour and severity in the proofs she demands for ascertaining the miracles faid to be wrought by their means. The whole feries of this process is described at large by one who perfectly well knew it, the late Pope Benedict XIV, in his valuable and elaborate work on the canonization of faints, out of which I shall here give a clear and fuccinct account of what concerneth miracles; which, whoever confiders with due attention, I dare fay, will readily acknowledge it to be impossible for the wit of man to use more effectual means for coming to the knowledge of the truth, and that if facts fo examined and attested could, this notwithstanding, be false or forged, we must bid an eternal adieu to all faith and credit among men.

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XXI. When any holy fervant of God dies in the odour of fanctity, whose virtuous and holy life gives a well-grounded hope to those who knew it, that his foul is received into eternal glory, the faithful

faithful are not hindered from having recourse in private to his intercession, and of asking benefits from Almighty God through the help of his prayers. If thefe favours be not granted, and no further figns of his being with God be manifested, this private devotion naturally decays, and with time vanishes entirely. But if Almighty God shall be pleafed to grant the favours demanded, and even to work miracles at the invocation of his holy fervant, thefe being published among the faithful, increase the reputation of his fanctity, and give greater and greater encouragement to others to have recourfe to his intercession, in hopes of receiving the like bleffings from God through his means. When this happens to be the case, things are allowed to go on without any judicial cognizance being taken about them for some time : Experience shows how easily the bulk of mankind, especially the unlearned, allow themselves to be furprifed by any thing that strongly affects them; the common opinion of the fancity of the person deceased, if followed by a report, whether true or falfe, of any miracle wrought by his means, cannot fail at first to make a deep impresfion on the minds of the vulgar; but if the foundation be falfe, the superstructure will foon fall to the ground; a little time must be given, and fome allowance must be made to these first transports of devotion; error cannot always continue to impose; and imposture fooner or later must be discovered :

discovered: But if the reputation of the person's fanctity increases; if the fame of supernatural events wrought by his intercession continues; if, inflead of diminishing, these things make greater and greater progrefs, and gain daily greater credit in the minds of men; then, from this constant and increasing public voice in his favours, there arifes a well-grounded motive for making a more particular enquiry into the nature and truth of those things which are alledged. If, therefore, the state, or any religious order, or any particular person or persons, who may have been connected with the deceafed, shall think proper, upon this public renown, to interest themselves in having his cause tried at the supreme tribunal, in order to his canonization, their first application must be to the diocesan bishop, to whom it belongs, in full right, to take a judicial cognizance in the first instance, of the public renown in the faint's favours, both as to his holy life and miracles; and this first judgment is so indispensibly required, that the court of Rome will not admit any cause of this kind to a hearing till this first step be taken, and the acts of this judicial inquiry of the bishop be fully proved before them, with all the formalities prescribed to be observed by him in making it. Now these formalities are ten in number, and are as follows: 1. To avoid all precipitation (as I observed above), the public renown of the fanctity and miracles of the deceafed must have existed for Dereve Mb

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for some considerable time, before the bishop be allowed to begin his proceedings of enquiring about them. 2. The bishop himself must preside, if possible, at all the steps of the process; and if. through necessity, he be obliged to substitute any of his inferior clergy in his place, this judge must have a doctor in divinity, and a licenciate in canon law for his affiftants. 2. He who takes the depolitions of the witnesses, must counter-sign every article along with the witnesses themselves, who subscribe them. 4. Each deponent must be asked a circumstantial relation of the facts he attests: It is not allowed to read over to the other witneffes what was deponed by the first, and cause it be confirmed by their confent; but each one must be examined apart by himfelf, and their answers extended at full length to each interrogatory. Nay, 5. The notary, and the promoter of the cause, as well as the witnesses themselves, must all be put under oath to observe the most profound silence with regard to the questions put, or the anfwers given. 6. Information must be fent to the Pope of the whole procedure, and of the judgment of the bithop passed thereupon. 7. A clean copy of all the papers must be made out in proper form, and these authenticated and well sealed; must be sent to the congregation of rites at Rome; 8. All the originals are preferved in the archives of the cathedral church of the diocese, in a proper cheft, well fealed, and under different keys, which

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which are deposited with different persons of rank and character. o. Besides the witnesses present. ed to the bishop by those who folicit the cause, he must also examine as many others as he can get account of, who are capable of giving any proper information. 10. No extra-judicial acts or attestations are allowed to be inferted among the authentic writings of the process. Now, who does not fee in all this procedure the utmost care and diligence used to prevent all imposition, and come to a diffinct and certain knowledge of the truth? The particular examination of each witness separately, the ignorance each one is in of the questions put to the others, the folemn oath all are obliged to take never to discover the subject of the questions put, or the answers given; the not being content with the witnesses presented by the folicitors of the cause, but the procuring as many others as can be got; the care to preferve the papers from all improper inspection; what are all these but the most efficacious steps to prevent collusion, either among the present witnesses, or in those who may be afterwards examined, and to procure from each the most exact information of what he knows, according as it really exists in his mind? One would be apt to think, that a miracle proved by this judgment alone might justly be deemed fufficient to gain all belief and credit from any reasonable unprejudiced person; and yet all this

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this is but as it were the prelude to what follows

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XXII. When the diocesan bishop has done his part, and from the evidence he has got in the above trial, has passed his sentence as to the miracles examined by him, an authentic copy of the whole process, well sealed, is sent to the congregation of rites at Rome, and there it must lie deposited with the notary of that congregation for ten years before the feals can be opened, or any further step be taken in the cause. During this period, however, feveral things are watchfully observed, if, If the public renown concerning the virtues and miracles of the faint continues in vigour and increases, or if it decays and fails. 2dly, If any serious accusations appear against him, any strong suspicions, any weighty doubts of his conduct. 3dly, If he had compofed any writings during his lifetime, thefe are most minutely scrutinized and examined, to see if any error, either with regard to faith or morals, appears in them; and if any of these things turn out against him, the cause is dropped entirely, and buried in eternal oblivion: But if all these particulars are favourable, at the expiration of the ten years the cause is taken up again in the congregation of rites in this manner: The folicitors for the cause demand of this court that the proceedings of the diocefan bishop may be opened and examined. This is done with all forma-

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lity; and if, upon examining these proceedings, it be found, that every thing was performed according to rule, then the Pope is applied to for a commission to authorize this congregation to proceed in the cause, which is granted accordingly, and by which the cause is taken entirely out of the hands of the diocesan, and every step that follows is done by authority of the fovereign Pontiff. This congregation of rites is a tribunal at Rome, composed of a number of cardinals, who are the chief judges, and of judges of the fecond order, who are called Confultors. The officers of this court are, 1. The promoter of the faith, or folicitor-general, who reprefents the public, and propofes every difficulty he can invent against the perfons whose causes are tried in this court. 2. The fecretary of the congregation. And, 3. The apostolic protonotary, with several inferior officers, advocates, notaries, and the like; all which take a folemn oath of secrecy with regard to the matters treated before them in the cause of canonizations, while in dependence, that by this means nothing may transpire which could give the smallest occasion to those who solicit for the cause to take any undue measures for promoting it. therefore, the cause is taken entirely into the hands of this court, the first step after this is to name three commissioners, authorized by the Pope, to take proper informations upon the spot, that is in the place itself where the miracles were performed, and where the faint's body is interred; thefe

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these are generally three of the neighbouring bishops, of whom the Ordinary of the diocese where the faint's body is, for the most part makes one, and of these three two make a quorum. Then the folicitors for the cause draw up in writing the articles to be examined by the commissioners, and class under different titles the several facts and miracles to be proved, which they judge the best founded, and the most proper for evidencing the fanctity of the deceased, and his glory in heaven. All these preparatory writings are given in to berevised by the promoter of the faith, who from them draws up instructions for his substitute with the commissioners, who is called the vice-promoter, and these contain all the objections and difficulties he can invent against the fasts and miracles proposed by the other party to be examined by the judges. All these papers, together with the commission to the judges, and the form of the oath to be taken by the court and witnesses, are carefully sealed up in one packet, and fent to the Ordinary of the place, who having conveened all the others concerned, the commission is opened and read, the oaths are taken, and the proper officers of the court appointed and fworn. A day is then fixed upon, and the witnesses called, and their depositions taken in the church, or some chapel or holy place. in order to inspire them with the greater respect, and the greater horror of perjury. The oath they take upon the holy gospels contains two parts, Cc2 1. That

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1. That they will declare the whole truth they know, without concealing or difguifing any part of it. And, 2. That they will not communicate to any one either the questions put to them, or the answers they give. After taking this oath, they are examined as to their quality, age, faith, learning, and then as to the feveral articles proposed by the folicitor of the cause, and on any other fubject which the judges think proper. At the end of every fession the papers are all sealed and locked up till the next meeting: and when the whole information is taken, all the papers are authenticated by the names and feals of the judges and principal officers of the court ; the originals deposited in the archives of the diocese; and clean copies of the whole collected in presence of the judges themfelves, and authenticated by all their feals and fubscriptions, are fent to Rome by a courier express, who is also fworn to execute his commission with all fidelity. confident to which the common first the plant com-

XXIII. Such is the procedure of this court in general; we shall now see more in detail the nature of the proof required by it in order to ascertain the facts examined. The general principle of the congregation of rites is, to treat these causes with the felf-same rigour with which criminal causes are tried in civil courts, and that the facts be proved with the same exactness, and all proceedings carried on with the same severity as if done for

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for the punishment of crimes. Suspected or inconclusive testimonies, such as would not be allowed as a ground for condemning a criminal, are for the same reasons in this court incapable of proving a miracle. Hence the following conditions are absolutely required in the witnesses, 1. There must be at least two or three who speak unanimously upon the same fact and its circumstances. A folitary testimony proves nothing: Contradictory testimonies annul and destroy one another; and fuch as only differ from one another but about effential articles, render one another mutually suspected: Those which re-unite in the same point may ferve as a support or corroboration, but give no certain proof: This is only allowed when the same facts and circumstances are uniformly attested by at least two or three witnesses. 2. The witnesses must depone what they themfelves faw with their own eyes, or heard with their own ears: Hearfay declarations, and teftimonies at second hand, are never admitted in the proof of miracles. 3. The witnesses must be of a fufficient age, and have proper knowledge and difcernment to diftinguish the nature of the things they relate; they must be Catholics of known probity, and give an account of their very motives for the testimony they give. 4. All the objections to their testimony which reason and the circumstances can furnish, either from their persons, qualities, or depolitions, are proposed and urged by the vice-promoter of the faith; a full hearing to them

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is given by the court, and they must be all solved by the other party to the satisfaction of the judges.

XXIV. When the acts and proceedings of the commissioners are sent to Rome, they are strictly examined by the congregation of rites, both as to their authenticity and validity; that is, if every form prescribed by law has been duly observed, and every prudent precaution taken to come at the truth; and if the congregation is fatisfied as to this head, it proceeds to re-examine the whole cause; but fifty years must be elapsed from the death of the faint before these steps can be taken. This delay is ordered for the fame reasons with those mentioned before, that nothing be done with precipitation, and to fee if any new light may appear in the mean time, either for or against the cause; and when, after this period, the cause is refumed, and all the judicial acts and proceedings of the commissioners verified and approved, then some of the principal articles of that process are felected to be tried and examined with the utmost rigour by this congregation itself, in three extraordinary affemblies, which are held at proper intervals for that purpose; and with regard to miracles, the question proposed to be discussed concerning them is, Whether or not a competent number of true miracles has been sufficiently proved in the process made by the commissioners? And notwithstanding all the precautions that have been used

used before, one may say with truth, that it is only now in discussing this question that the trial of the reality of the miracles is made. To proceed with greater distinction, the question propofed is divided into two, each of which is examined feparately: The first is, Whether the actual existence of the miraculous facts produced in the procefs, have been thoroughly proved before the commifsioners? Secondly, Whether these facts be really Supernatural and true miracles, the work of God and of good angels? The discussion of the first of these brings on a review of the whole process. wherein the proceedings of the commissioners, the witnesses, their qualifications, their depositions, and all the circumstances are canvassed; the promoter of the faith himfelf pleads every difficulty he can imagine against them; all which must be thoroughly folved by the folicitors for the cause: and if they fail in this, to the conviction of the judges, the miracle is rejected as not proved. If the existence of the facts be indubitable, then the court proceeds to examine the other question. Whether these facts so proved are supernatural and true miracles? is evangued by the tales of

XXV. In examining this point three different classes of miracles are distinguished; some are of such a stupenduous nature as evidently to surpass all created power, and show themselves at once to be the work of the Creator, and these are of the

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first order. Others less astonishing may, for aught we know, be within the power and abilities of those created intellectual beings, whose knowledge and power far exceed ours; and these are of the second order. Others again are in substance natural events which may be produced by the assistance of art; but from the concurrence of circumstances, and the manner in which they are performed, become truly miraculous; and these are of the third order.

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Now, when any miracle of the first order is produced, and the fact undoubtedly proved, there needs no further discussion; it carries in its bosom the proofs of its divinity, and shows itself at first fight to be the immediate work of God; and in this view the raising a dead person to life is always considered.

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XXVI. In miracles of the fecond order, which are plainly supernatural, that is, above all the efforts of human power, the question is, to discern whether they be the work of God or the operations of evil spirits? In deciding this, the fact is examined by the rules of the criterion for this purpose; the most important of which we have above described; to which some other circumstances are added by this court, and in all make sive principal qualities to constitute in their judgment a divine miracle; they are as follows: 1mo, The reality of the effect; the power of evil spirits is limited

mited, that of God has no bounds; the marvellous produced by the devil, is at best but a vain appearance, which fascinates the senses, or seduces the attention: but a true miracle operates a real effect. ado. The duration: effects of inchantment are frequently only inftantaneous; those of true miracles are permanent. 2tio, The utility; God Almighty does not employ his power in value Childish events and changes, which end in no other confequence but to cause fear or astonishment, are unworthy the attention of a reasonable man, much less do they deserve that the divine wisdom should make use of a particular order of his providence to produce them; still less can it be supposed that Almighty God would act in a miraculous manner to exhibit things indecent, or ridiculous, or favourable to any unjust or pernicious designs. 4to, The means used; prayer, invocation of the holy name of God, of the bleffed Trinity, of the faints, are the means for obtaining true miracles from God: false wonders are produced by having recourse to the devil, by superstitious spells, shameful artifices, or extravagant actions. 5to, The principal object; Almighty God can have no other ultimate end in all he does but his own glory, and our real happinels. The confirmation or the advancement of piety and Christian justice, and the fanctification of fouls, are the only supreme motives ultimately worthy his goodness and infinite wisdom: Miracles of the fecond order must be attended with all these qualities

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qualities, before they can be admitted in this court as divine, and the want of any one of them would effectually discredit it for ever.

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XXVII. Miracles of the third order, fuch as miraculous curesof difeases, are examined in the frictest manner; and it must necessarily be proved. to the conviction of the judges, that they were attended with all those circumstances which evidently show the operation was divine. The circumflances indispensibly required in cures of deleases are as follows: 1mo, That the difease be considerable, dangerous, inveterate, fuch as commonly refifts the thrength of known medicines, or at least that it be long and difficult by their means to produce a perfect cure. 2do. That the difease be not come to its last period, in which it is natural to look for a remission of its symptoms and a cure. atio, That the ordinary helps of natural remedies have not been used, or at least that there be just reason from the time elapsed since taking them, and other circumstances, that they could have no influence in the cure. 4ta, That the cure be fudden and momentaneous; that the violent pains or imminent danger cease all at once, instead of diminishing gradually, as happens in the operations of nature. sto, That the cure be perfect and entire. 6to,. That there happened no crisis, nor any sensible alteration which might have naturally wrought

the cure. 7mo, That the health recovered be confrant, and not followed by a speedy relapse.

cles performed by Almighty frod at algorithmical on XXVIII. The concurrence of all these conditions and circumstances must be proved with the utmost evidence before the miraculousness of these facts can be approved; and in this discussion the greatest rigour is used. The promoter of the faith starts every possible difficulty; and to assist him in this, he is allowed to call in divines, physicians, natural philosophers, mathematicians, and others skilled in the respective matters belonging to the miracle under examination: to these the case is exposed, and if they can give any rational and natural account how the effect might be produced without having recourse to miracles, which the opposite party cannot gainfay, or if they can put any well founded objection against the miraculousness of the fact which the others cannot solve. the miracle is forthwith rejected. It is however true, in order that all justice may be done, that the folicitors for the cause are also allowed to call in learned people in the feveral sciences to their affiftance, to answer the difficulties proposed by the promoter of the faith, and obviate his objections, if it be possible to do fo.

XXIX. Such is the procedure of the court of Rome in afcertaining the existence and continuation of miracles in these later ages; and by this rigorous

gorous process have been tried, approved, and published to the world, vast numbers of glorious miracles performed by Almighty God at the intercession of his faints down to these very present days in which we live. Let then the most determined enemies of miracles confider attentively only this thort sketch of these proceedings which I have here related, and let them feriously ask their own hearts' if the scrupulous attention and rigorous investigation of this court does not merit their highest approbation and praise, rather than excite their cenfure? And let them fay if they think it possible for the most ingenious wit to invent more affured means for unmalking imposture and preventing error, than what is used by this tribunal? The most facred things in religion, folemn oaths, and the fear of the greatest ecclesiastical censures, are used to draw out the exact truth from the witnesses; the strongest precautions that human prudence can fuggest are made use of to certify the judges of their capacity, their morals, and their difinterestedness; they proceed with slow steps, and with all maturity, and the same matters are examined again and again at confiderable intervals, fo that there can be no danger of mistake from precipitation, nor of their being mifguided by any enthufiaftic zeal; and when we consider the proceedings of the Ordinary, and the fcrutiny they undergo at Rome, the re-examination of the same subjects by the apostolical commissioners, and the discussion of their ED CVI TE proceedings

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proceedings with the same severity, the particular informations taken of the miracles themselves, and the conditions required to accompany them; the oppolition made to them by the promoter of the faith, and the disputes raised on purpose between physicians and other learned people on each fide of the question concerning them, we will be forced to acknowledge that a miraculous fact which has undergone this rigorous trial, and appears after that invested with the approbation of this tribunal, is attended with fuch convincing evidence, that a man must have lost both common sense and reason who calls it any longer in question. Seeing then that numbers, great numbers of miracles have passed this fiery trial, and have been published to the world with the full fanction and approbation of this court, even in thefe prefent times, the conclusion is manifest, that the politive proof for the continuation of miracles is beyond difpute strong and convincing, and that the miraculous powers have not till this day been taken from the Catholic church; that numbers of miracles continue from time to time to be wrought in her communion: that the promifes of Christ in this respect have hitherto had no limitation, and that, as all the prefumptive evidence formerly adduced tends to assure us, they will continue in their usual force to the end of ages.

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APPENDIX,

By way of DIALOGUE:

In which the authority of Miracles in proof of doctrine is further examined and illustrated by being applied to a particular example; and the doctrine made choice of for that purpose is the celebrated article of Transubstantiation, which, being exposed to many difficulties both from sense and reason, is the most unlikely of any to admit of such a proof, and therefore the most proper for such examination.

ORTHODOXUS. PHILARETES.

Orthod. GOOD morrow, Philaretes, whence fo early a vifit from you to-day? I hope all is well.

Phil. All is well, thank God! but I am come to ask your opinion about a late dispute, between your friend Eufebius and Benevolus, concerning transfubstantiation; have you heard of it?

Onthod. I have; and think Benevolus must have been in great heat indeed, when he expressed himfelf in the unguarded manner he did against that doctrine, if it be really true what is alledged of him.

Phil. You mean, I suppose, when he said, He would not believe transubstantiation though Eusebius should work a miracle, yea, though he should raise a man from the dead in attestation of it.

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Orthod. I do.

Phil. Well, Sir, he not only faid so in the heat of the dispute, but he has since repeated the same in all coolness; nay, has affirmed it under his hand in some letters that have passed between him and Eusebius upon that subject, and in which he is so consident of being in the right, that he affirms, He is able to defend that proposition before a general council, and that he is as certain Eusebius is in the wrong in blaming it, as he is certain that the word of God is true.

Orthod. Stoutly faid indeed! but, pray, does he pretend to bring any proofs for that affertion? does he alledge any thing from the word of God in defence of it?

Phil. He does so, I assure you; I have jotted down his arguments, and am come here this morning only to have your opinion of the matter, as I would wish to understand it to the bottom.

Orthod. You are always welcome to me, my dear Sir, and never more so than when you come on such errands; for it yields me a particular pleafure to give you all the assistance I can in improving your mind with useful knowledge, especially on the important subject of religion.

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Phil. I am infinitely obliged to you for your kindness, which I have already so often experienced, and of which I shall always preserve the most grateful remembrance. And now, if you please, let me know first what you think of the above proposition

proposition itself, and then I shall propose the ar-

Orthod. It needs very little knowledge in theology to fee that the proposition is highly blameable and worthy of censure; and I am not surprised that several well-meaning serious Christians, who have heard of it, are much offended at it: The very sound of it is hurtful to pious ears; and no wonder; for it contains in its bosom a supposition nearly bordering upon blasphemy, if not altogether such.

Phil. I own, indeed, it founds very harfhly; but it does not appear to me to contain any thing blasphemous; I will therefore be glad you give me your reasons for passing upon it so severe a censure.

Orthod. I shall do so to your conviction. In the first place you must observe this truth, that God alone is master of life and death; no created being, however great its natural powers may be, can, by its own strength, either give life to any man at first, or restore it to him after God has deprived him of it. To give life then at first, or to restore it after death, is a work proper to the almighty power of the Creator *. If therefore Eusebius, or any one else, as an instrument in the hand of God, should raise a man from death in attestation of transulftantiation, and yet Benevolus resule to believe that tenet, this resulal necessarily supposes that transubstantiation is a falsehood, notwithstand-

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See Chap. X. on the Criterion, where this is proved at large.

ing the attestation given to it by this miracle; and as none but God is capable of performing such a miracle, it further necessarily supposes, that Almighty God can work a miracle proper to himself alone, in attestation of a falsehood, which every man of common sense must see is a most blasphemous supposition.

Phil. I fee well the force of what you fay; but may it not be alledged, that though God can no more work miracles himself to support a salsebood, than he can lie or cheat; yet he may permit the devil or wicked men to work miracles for bad ends? and if so, then it may be further supposed that a miracle wrought in attestation of transubstantiation is the work of Satan and not of God, which at once frees Benevolus's proposition from all shadow of blasphemy.

Orthod. Properly speaking the devil can work no miracles at all; the lying signs and wonders which are within the reach of his power are very different from the Christian idea of a miracle; much less can Satan do any even of these lying wonders in those circumstances where his doing so would unavoidably be taken for the work of the most high *; and in this I dare say Benevolus himself will join issue with me. But allowing that Almighty God should permit evil spirits to do things miraculous, that are within the sphere of their own natural strength, for bad ends, this could never excuse the above proposition from the charge

^{*} See this proved above, Chap. X. on the Criterion,

you,

of blasphemy, except you can prove at the same time that to raise a dead man to life is within the natural power of Satan; for this is the miracle Benevolus himself makes use of in his affertion.

Phil. And why may it not be faid that the de-

Orthod. Whoever attempts to prove this will find a very heavy talk upon his hand, for teveral reasons; 1mo, Because there are the strongest arguments from the word of God, which prove, that to raise the dead is an operation proper to God alone. 2do, Because Deists and other insides have long been labouring with all their might to prove such a power in Satan, as being of the utmost benefit to their cause, but have never yet been able to effectuate it. 3tio, Because of the satal consequences that will necessarily flow, if he should make good his point in proving it.

Phil. Pray what consequence would flow from

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Orthod. Nothing less than undermining the very foundation of Christianity! Observe: The Christian religion glories in having been attested by miracles which none but the Almighty could perform, and which on that account incontestibly prove its divine original: Among these the raising of the dead to life has always been esteemed a miracle of the first order, and the proper work of the singer of God. If therefore you can prove that this does not exceed the natural abilities of Satan,

you, by so doing, deprive our holy religion of one of its chief supports, and bring a suspicion of falsehood on all the other miracles that ever were wrought in its favours: For if it be within the natural power of the devil to perform so great a miracle as is the raising of a dead man to life, what security can we have that he is not able to perform all the others also? And what an important piece of news will this be to Deism and insidelity? Let Benevolus therefore thuse which side he pleases, he will never be able to extricate himself from this sad dilemma: "Either his proposition must said condemned of blasphemy, or the Christian religion must fall in its vindication."

Phil. What you fay is indeed very strong, nor do I see what answer can possibly be made to it. I shall therefore give up the point entirely as to the proposition itself, and only wish to know what reply you would make to such arguments as may be used in defence of it.

Orthod. Have a little patience; we must not leave the proposition so soon. What I have said is not the only reason for condemning it: It is equally censurable on another account, which it is also necessary to show you, because it takes place even in the supposition, that to raise the dead is a work within the natural powers of Satan. I suppose Benevolus does not imagine that, if Eusebius should raise one from the dead in attestation of transubstantiation, he would make use of inchantments,

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though a Papist, is surely a Christian, who believes in one God, and in Jesus Christian, who believes in one God, and in Jesus Christians Son; and if he believes transubstantiation to be a true doctrine, he believes it for no other reason, but because he is persuaded it was revealed by God; and if ever he should attempt to raise one from the dead in attestation of it, he would do so only by invoking the Almighty God for that purpose.

Phil. All this will be readily granted; but what then?

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Orth. Let us then suppose that Eusebius does so; that he calls upon God to perform this miracle, and that the miracle called for is actually performed, with what face can Benevolus refuse to believe the doctrine thus attested? It is impossible for him to give any colcur of reason for such incredulity, but by a supposition which leads to, or rather plainly includes another blafphemy; namely, that Almighty God, when invoked by teachers of false doctrine, but who pretend to be fent by him (for fuch Benevolus must believe Eufebius to be in the present case), and when called upon by them to work a miracle in testimony of their false doctrine, though he will not himself perform the miracle, yet may permit the devil to perform it? Would not God in this supposition as effectually concur to testify a falsehood, as if he had wrought the miracle himself? Does not a king as effectualy concur to confirm and approve any commission, to which

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which he allows his feal to be put by his minister. as if he had put it on with his own hand? Miracles are the broad feal of heaven; the devils, as well as all other creatures, are but the ministers of God, in whatever way he pleases to employ them: When, therefore, Almighty God is direcly called upon to perform any miracle, whether he does it himfelf, or permits the devil to do it, it is evidently the felf-fame thing as to the weight of the attestation given by it to men; and in either case he equally concurs to attest a falsehood where the doctrine proposed is not true; which to affert, if it be not blasphemy, I know not what can be fo: And yet even this is not all; there is still another great evil contained in this supposition; for if it could be made out that God, in the above circumflances, can allow the devil to perform the miracle required, we must then also bid farewel to Christianity as well as in the former case. When we see wicked men, that set themfelves openly to oppose God and his truths, endeavour by inchantments, and by calling upon the devil to perform figns and wonders to confirm their errors, we can easily see that, in cases of this kind, Almighty God, for his own wife ends, may permit the devil to use his natural strength, and do things miraculous in the eyes of the beholders. This was the case with the magicians of Pharaoh, and the false prophets mentioned Deut, xiii. and will be the case with Antichrist at the end of the world;

world; but all examples of this kind carry their evidence on their foreheads, which shows that fuch teachers are not from God, even though figns and wonders should be performed. But when a person pretends to be fent by God, calls upon God to work a miracle in confirmation of what he teaches, and depends upon God alone for the performance of it; if this miracle should actually be performed, and especially if it be a miracle of the highest order, and confessedly above the natural power of creatures, this must certainly give the most undoubted conviction, that that person is from God, and that what he teaches is true. Upon this ground it was that the world was converted to Christianity: its preachers professed they were commissioned by God to teach that religion: they called upon God to work miracles to atteft the truth of what they preached, and in his name the miracles were accordingly performed. This was fufficient; mankind, from the very feelings of their own hearts, were convinced, that Almighty God, in these circumstances, could never have allowed wicked spirits to perform these miracles, had these teachers been impostors, or their doctrine false, and therefore embraced Christianity as truths revealed by their Creator: if therefore it could be proved, that in the above circumstances Almighty God may allow the devil to perform the miracles required, though the doctrine attested by them be false, then it was imprudent

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prudent to believe the first teachers of Christianity, since it was possible their miracles may have been performed by Satan, and their doctrine be all a delusion! See to what shocking consequences Benevolus's proposition necessarily leads us!

Phil. I must own I had no idea that it contained such consequences as these; and yet from what you have said, I see there is no desending it from them; and for my own part, I am thoroughly convinced of its dreadful tendency; nor should I insist more upon the matter; only, as I may have occasion to converse with others about it, I would wish to know what can be said to the arguments by which they may pretend to support it.

Orth. Let us hear then what these arguments are: I may venture to foretel beforehand that they are nothing to the purpose; nay, that you can be at no loss yourself, after what has been said, to see the weakness and inconclusiveness of them.

Phil. I shall not say what intrinsic weight they may have at the bottom; but I cannot help thinking they have no small degree of shew and appearance: I shall propose them as follows in Benevolus's own words: "Though you should work a miracle, even raise a person from the dead in

- attestation of transubstantiation, I would not be convinced by it, but would believe that Almigh-
- ty God had permitted that miracle as a trial of
- my faith and stedfastness in the truth, and not as

done for confirming that doctrine; and I have good reason to say so: 1/t, Because it is plain, both from the Old and New Testaments, viz. from the magicians of Egypt, the falle prophets men-' tioned Deut. xiii. and from Antichrift, that miracles may be wrought feemingly in attestation of falfe doctrine, though really they are permitted to try people's faith: And, 2dly, Because transubstantiation is incapable of being proved by miracle." In which words you fee two reafons are included in defence of the proposition, viz. " That God may permit wicked spirits to work miracles for their own bad ends, though his delign in permitting them is only to try our faith: and that transubstantiation is incapable of being proved by any miracle."

Orth. The first of these reasons has been anfwered already in what I have faid above; but that you may still more clearly see the weakness of it, I shall make another short observation upon You know there are two different kinds of miracles that may be wrought in confirmation of doctrine; fome that do not exceed the natural powers of spiritual beings, whether good or bad. and are called relative miracles; others which are above the reach of all created power, and can be performed by none but God himself, and are therefore called absolute miracles *. A relative miracle. known to be fuch, can never of itself give thorough VOL. II. E e conviction

^{*} See above, Chap. I. on the different kinds of miracles.

conviction of the truth of any doctrine, except it be otherwise proved to be the work of God or of his good angels commissioned by him: But a miracle of the fecond kind, which is above all created power, must give the most absolute conviction that the person at whose desire it is performed is fent by God, and that the word of the Lord in his mouth is true, I Kings xvii *. Now the examples above cited by Benevolus from the scripture, are all of the first kind, merely relative; they show indeed that God may, and fometimes does, permit the devil, by means of his agents, to do extraordinary things within the compass of his own natural strength, seemingly in attestation of falsehood, tho' permitted by God only to try people's faith, or for fome other good end; but what is that to the purpose? The raising of a dead man to life is a miracle above the utmost power of Satan, a miracle proper to God alone, and which therefore is the most irrefragable proof that can be imagined of the truth of any doctrine in confirmation of which it is performed: Allowing then that the devil is sometimes permitted to do figns and wonders within the reach of his own abilities for the support of false doctrine, will this ever excuse Benevulus for refufing to believe a doctrine which he supposes confirmed by a miracle proper to God himself, and which none but his Almighty power can perform? For my part, I fee nothing to which fuch incredulity

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^{*} See above, Chap. IX. on the authority of miracles.

dulity can be compared but that of Pharaoh; for though Moses wrought such miracles before that prince as obliged even his own magicians to confess, That the finger of God was there, yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them, Exod. viii. 19 It is also extremely unlucky for Benevolus, that our blessed Saviour himself brings this very case of refusing to believe the one rose from the dead, as an instance of the most obstinate and consummate insidelity, Luke xvi. 31. Nor do I see how Benevolus's proposition can well escape the same condemnation; at least I think it more than manifest that this first argument you have brought cannot defend him from it.

Phil. I must indeed acknowledge I do not see how it can; and its fallacy is evident from the distinction between relative and absolute miracles, which I did not at first advert to: But what do you say to the second reason alledged, that transubstantiation is altogether incapable of being proved by any miracle?

Orth. If this be really true, and can be clearly proved, then the dispute must be at an end, and victory must declare for Benevolus; I suppose he has summed up all that can be said to prove this affertion, as I know it is a favourite topic of his; let us hear then what he says for this purpose.

Phil. I assure you he says a great deal, and perhaps more to the purpose than you may imagine. I shall state his arguments in his own words: "I

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fay transubstantiation is incapable of being prov-

ed by a miracle, and that for two reasons; first, because there is the same evidence against that

doctrine that there can be for the truth of any

' miracle; I mean the testimony of the human sen-

' ses; for, if I believe my senses, I cannot believe

' transubstantiation; and if I disbelieve my senses,

' I could not believe the truth of your miracle.

"Secondly, Transubstantiation is incapable of be-

ing proved by a miracle, because it involves many

' contradictions in it." He then goes on to show some of the many contradictions which slow from this tenet, and which you see make it absolutely impossible that any miracle can prove it to be true; for what in itself is founded in contradiction, and is therefore an impossibility, can never be proved to be a truth by any evidence whatsoever.

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orth. I imagined in my own mind that his arguments would land there; these are the common topics that are urged against transubstantiation, and have been again and again answered to the full by those who adopt that doctrine; I would not wish to take up your time by repeating here what they have said, and which you will find at large in their writings; but as all these arguments against transubstantiation are sounded in either a real or pretended ignorance of what its abettors believe and teach concerning it, I shall lay before you a clear explication of that doctrine itself, by which you will immediately

immediately see how little to the purpose all these objections are against it.

Phil. You will do me a particular pleasure; for, to say the truth, I do not think I have a clear idea of it myself, and, in the many disputes I have heard about it, I have often thought that the disputants did not seem to understand one another, or even to have a clear and distinct idea of what they would be at themselves.

Orth. That is too often the case in disputes about religion: Every one thinks himself quite master of that subject, though in reality his knowledge of it be exceedingly superficial; he forms to himself, for the most part, very false and unjust ideas of the tenets of his adversaries, and, in fighting against them, he only combats the phantoms of his own fancy; hence, there is no end to wrangling, nor to numbers of very improper, nay, impious expressions which are uttered on such occasions, among which I fear Benevolus's proposition will find a distinguished place: This, in a great measure, appears already, and will appear more as we go on in our examination of it.

Phil. I dare fay your observation is most just, and am persuaded that many religious disputes would soon be at an end, if the parties, before they begin to argue, would condescend upon the precise point in question, and lay down a clear and plain account of their respective tenets; I long to hear this done with regard to transubstantiation.

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Orth.

Orthod. All the arguments of reason urged against this doctrine are drawn from philosophy; and you fee the two arguments used by Benevolus are entirely of this kind. Hence it is incumbent on the abettors of transubstantion, only to reconcile it with found philosophy, and all fuch objections against it must vanish. In philosophy we must distinguish two parts; what is founded in plain facts. and the experience of common fenfe, and what is merely systematical, and invented only to folve the phænomena of nature. The former is constant and uniform, and must be the same in all ages to every attentive enquirer; the other is fluctuating and inconstant, and has changed like a fashion almost in Arguments have been made against every age. transubstantiation, from the principles adopted by these different systems of philosophy, and have, with equal eafe, been folved from the same self-adopted principles. It is needless to repeat here what has been urged from such systems as are exploded in this present age: I shall therefore confine myself to what is now looked upon as the most certain and rational fystem, because more closely connected with experience and observation, and, upon its principles, explain to you what the Roman Catholics teach concerning transubstantiation.

Phil. I suppose you mean the philosophy of the mind and of common sense, which Dr Reid in his inquiry, and Dr Beattie in his essay on truth, have so clearly displayed, and so solidly established.

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Orth. I do; and from the language of nature, which these learned gentlemen have so clearly explained, I lay down the sollowing observations, which will serve as so many principles in our present inquiry.

1mo, The different qualities which we observe in the bodies around us, by means of our fenfes, to wit, their colour, fmell, tafte, and the like, are by no means in these bodies themselves what they are in our mind; in us they are fensations, feelings, or perceptions excited in our mind, by the mediate or immediate action of these external objects upon the organs of our fenfes. Thus, for example, the feeling we have of colour, is by no means in the coloured body, but is excited by the rays of light reflected from that body in a certain manner, which, striking on our eyes, excites in the mind that fensation which we call colour; and, according to the different proportions in which the rays of light are reflected to our eyes, the fenfations of different colours are excited in our mind. In like manner, when we feel the fweet tafte of fugar, the fweetness we feel is by no means in the fugar, but is only a perception or feeling excited in our mind by the manner in which the particles of fugar act upon our organ of tafte when applied to it. And the same observation holds true in all the sensible qualities which we perceive in the bodies around us; and may be further explained by an eafy fimilitude. When the point of a needle is pressed u.

pon any part of our body, we immediately feel that uneafy fensation which we call pain; now it is evident this pain is not in the needle, but is a feeling of our mind caused by the needle; so when we fmell a rofe, the agreeable odour we feel is not in the rose, but is a sensation excited in our mind by the effluvia of the rofe when applied to our organ of fmell. Hence,

2do. In examining the objects about us we must carefully diftinguish three things; first, the feelings or fensations excited in our minds by the actions of these objects upon our organs of sense; secondly, these particular qualities or dispositions of these objects themselves, by which they are apt to excite fuch feelings in us; and, thirdly, the material part or substance of these objects in which these particular qualities or dispositions reside.

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atio, A little attention to what passes in our own minds will thoroughly convince us that we are totally ignorant of the material part or substance of all the objects around us; that we are no lefs ignorant of the nature of all those particular qualities or dispositions of bodies by which they act upon our organs, and excite certain feelings and fenfations in our mind, and that all the knowledge we naturally can have about bodies is confined to their fensible qualities alone as perceived by us: From these we argue, that there are bodily objects really existing without us, and independent of us; that they have in themselves certain qualities or dispositions

dispositions of their component parts, apt to excite various sensations in us when applied to the organs of our senses; that these qualities are different in different objects, of which some are apt to excite some kind of sensations in us, and others to excite others, according to these several qualities which they posses: And that these qualities may be changed in the same object, so that it shall cease to excite the same sensations in us which it formerly did, when applied to our senses, and excite others which it did not raise before, &c.

4to, As it is experience alone that discovers to us the connection between the feveral bodies around us, and the corresponding fensations they excite in our mind; and as this connection is conflant, we naturally conclude, that these bodies are the causes of the sensations we feel, and being ignorant of the manner in which they produce these effects, " without enquiring farther," as Dr Reid justly observes, " we attribute to the ' cause some vague and indistinct notion of power or virtue to produce the effect. In many cases the purposes of life do not make it necessary to ' give diffinct names to the cause and the effect; ' and hence it happens, that being closely con-' nected in the imagination, though very unlike to each other, one name ferves for both, which occasions an ambiguity in many words, which having the fame causes in all languages, is common to all. Thus magnetism both signifies the

o power or virtue in the loadstone to attract the

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firon as a cause, and the motion in the iron to-

wards the loadstone as an effect. Heat both fig-

' nifies a sensation of our mind, and a quality or

flate of bodies apt to excite that fensation in us.

The names of all fmells, tastes, sounds, as well

as beat and cold, have a like ambiguity in all

' languages, though in common language they

are rarely used to signify the sensations, but for

' the most part they signify the external qualities

' indicated by the fenfations."

fible qualities of bodies is ambiguous; it both fignifies that particular aptitude, that power or virtue which is in bodies to excite certain fensations in our mind when applied to our organs of sense; and it also signifies these very sensations themselves. In the former sense it signifies a thing of which we have no idea, but are totally ignorant of what it consists; in the latter sense it signifies a thing with which we are thoroughly acquainted.

of fensible qualities as residing in the objects around us, so we are equally ignorant of the manner how they excite their corresponding sensations in our mind. We can see no reason why the rays of light variously reslected to your eyes, should excite in us the sensations of various colours, nor why the motion of the air should excite the idea of sound, or the fire heat, or sugar sweetness, or the

the like: by experience we know it is fo, but why or how it is fo, of this we know nothing at all; we must resolve this into the will of the Creator, who has so ordered it, and who doubtless might have ordered it otherwise if he had thought proper.

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7mo, Belides the fensations which external bodies excite in our mind by our organs of fenfe as the immediate objects of these organs, we find alfo from experience, that they produce many other fensible effects, both upon our bodies and upon one another when applied to action. Thus ipecacuan, besides the ideas of its colour, taste, and finell which it excites in our mind by the organs of our fenfe, when taken into our stomach, it alfo excites vomiting; jalap purges; opium affuages pain, and causes sleep; wine intoxicates; and fo on of others: we know all fuch effects of different bodies only by experience; but we are totally ignorant of the manner how they produce them, or what particular quality or disposition it is in each by which it produces the effect proper to it; but as experience teaches us, that they constantly do produce these effects in the same circumstances, we naturally attribute to each body a quality, power, or virtue proper to itself, and beflowed upon it by the Creator, by which it fo produces them; and all fuch powers of bodies may also be included under the same general name of Sensible qualities of bodies, because they manifest fest themselves to our senses by the sensible effects they produce.

800, If we enquire in what all these sensible qualities of bodies confift, or what is that particular disposition of each body by which it produces the effects proper to it? what it is, for example, in the ipecacuan that makes it emetic-in the jalap that purges-in wine that inebriates, and fo on? Here we must acknowledge our total ignorance, and confess that we know nothing of the matter. If we suppose the original primitive matter which composes the substance of all bodies, to be the fame in all, and that it acts mechanically, which feems to be the most univerfally received opinion, then we can conceive no other way by which the different qualities of different bodies can be accounted for, but by the different figure, motion, and combination of the particles of this matter ufed in the structure of each body. It is indeed true, that a difference in these things exceedingly alters the fensible qualities of bodies; witness the various and opposite qualities of quickfilver, according to the various changes wrought in the ftructure of its component parts by fire; and it feems to be the most approved cpinion of philosophers, that all the valt variety of productions from the earth is only owing to the different modifications of the texture of the same nutritive juice, according to the different plant by which it is imbibed. But whether this be the real case, or if it

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holds univerfally in all the variety of creatures; or if there be, in fact, different kinds of primitive matter of which different bodies are composed, and to which their different qualities are owing; or if these qualities arise from the mechanical structure of their parts; or if they be the immediate effects of the divine will impressed upon different compositions of the same original matter, by way of a law; or in whatever other manner these sensible effects are brought about, of all this we are entirely ignorant.

Phil. What you have faid feems perfectly clear. and the substance of it, I think, may be summed up in a few words, thus: The fensible effects which the various bodies about us produce, either in ourfelves, or in one another, are objects of our knowledge, of which we are absolutely certain, from the testimony of our senses. From these sensible effects we justly argue the real existence of those bodies which produce them; and also that these bodies have in themselves certain qualities by which they are capable of producing these effects: But with regard to the matter or substance of the bodies in which these qualities reside, its nature and structure, or the nature of these qualities themfelves by which the effects are produced, this is entirely hidden from our eyes. All this I eafily understand, as it is extremely clear; but I do not perceive what connection all this has with tranfubstantiation.

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Orth. That we shall now fee, after taking a wiew of the manner how we reason concerning the fubstance of bodies from the above observations. Let us then suppose, according to the most received opinion of the learned, that the elementary matter, or materia prima, of all bodies, is univerfally of the fame kind throughout the whole creation; and that this vast diversity of bodily objects only arises from the different manner in which this original matter is formed in the structure and composition of these different bodies: This original matter is the common fubstance of all bodies; the particular structure it has in different kinds of bodies constitutes their esential diverfity, or their different natures; and it is by their fensible qualities as perceived by us, which flow from the particular structure of each kind, that we diftinguish one kind of bodily substance from another. Hence, what we properly understand, for example, by the substance of iron, is the elementary matter formed in fuch a manner as to excité in our minds that collection of sensible qualities which we perceive in iron. What we understand by the substance of bread, is a portion of the fame elementary matter, fo formed as to excite in our mind that other collection of fensible qualities which we perceive in bread; and fo on of all others. Now, as it is most reasonable to suppofe, that the Author of Nature acts in a constant uniform manner in the ordinary course of nature, and

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and that when the effects are entirely of the fame kind, the causes producing them are of the same kind also: for this reason, when we find the same collection of fentible qualities in different individual bodies, we conclude that the fubstance of these bodies is of the same kind: and on the contrary, when we find the collection of fenfible qualities in one body different from those in ano. ther, we conclude their fubstances are of different kinds, although in reality we know nothing at all about the nature of the one substance or of the other, nor in what their difference consists. Thus in examining a piece of iron and a bit of wood, we find the collection of the fenfible qualities of the one very different from those in the other; and therefore we denote them different fubstances, and give them different names; but when we examine two pieces of iron, or two pieces of wood by themselves, we find the sensible qualities of both the fame; and therefore conclude, that their substance is also of the same kind, and we give them the fame name.

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The fentible qualities of bodies are the immediate and fole objects of our fenfes, and with regard to them our fenfes are the fole and absolute judges from whose ultimate sentence there is no appeal. In like manner, whatever changes happen in these sensible qualities, they fall immediately under the cognisance of the senses, to which alone it belongs to give us the proper and certain

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information of all such changes. From such information we argue, that if any change be produced in the sensible qualities, there must also be a corresponding change in the nature of the body itself by which these effects are produced, although we are perfectly ignorant wherein this change in the cause consists: But where our senses inform us of no change in the sensible qualities there, we conclude that there is no change in the body from which these effects proceed.

Now, though it be most just and reasonable to argue in this manner, and we may fafely depend upon it in all the ordinary occurrences of life, at least where we have no positive reason to suspect it; yet it must be owned, that we see no impossibility in supposing, that Almighty God may cause two very different substances act on us in such a manner as to affect our fenfes in the very fame way, and thereby exhibit to us the fame fensible qualities: Nay, we are so far from feeing any impossibility in this, that we know from revelation, that in fact it often has been the case. The substance of a living man composed of a foul and body, is confessedly acknowledged to be very different from the substance of an angel, which is purely spiritual; and yet it is certain, from the word of God, that angels have often taken upon them all the fenfible qualities of living men, that is, have appeared as fuch to the fight of those who beheld them-have spoken and conversed as such in their hearinghave anonametica

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have taken hold of them, and wreffled with them to as to appear fuch to their touch have walked, fit down, eat and drank, and, in a word, exhibited themselves to the senses of those who beheld them, to all intents and purpoles, in the same way that any real man would do. It cannot be called in question that there is an infinite distance between the bodily fubstance of a dove, composed of flesh and blood, and the incomprehensible substance of the divinity; and yet we know, that when our bleffed Saviour was baptized in Jordan, the Holy Ghoft, the third person of the adorable trinity, was pleased to exhibit himself to those prefent under the outward appearance of a dove, affecting their fight in the fame way that a real dove would have done, had it been flying above our Saviour at that time. Now, in these and other fuch cafes, as are related in scripture, it is plain. that the above way of arguing, from the fameness of the femille effects, to the fameness or similarity of the cause producing them, would not hold. This may be further illustrated even in natural things; for how often do we fee cooks, apothecaries, and brewers of wines or fpirits, make up diffies, drugs, and various wines, reprefenting fo exactly what they are not, that the nicest judge, upon the strictest examination, could not distinguish them from what they represent? In these cases alfo were we to conclude, from the fameness of the fensible qualities, that the substances of these Ff 3 things

things are really what these qualities represent, we would be deceived as well as in the former cases. Yet in neither case would the senses be deceived; for the sensations excited in our minds by their means, perfectly correspond to the actions of these external objects made upon them; and from these sensations we conclude with absolute certainty the existence of these external objects, and that they have a power or quality of acting upon our senses, so as to excite these sensations in our mind; but with absolute certainty we can go no further.

To come now to the point, if we apply the above observations to bread and wine, we find that bread and wine have a number of fenfible qualities, that is, a certain colour, tafte, fmell, &c. proper to themselves, and when examined by our fenses, they excite in our minds the sensations to which we give these names, and which we call the sensible qualities, or forms, or species, or appearances of bread and wine. These we know by our fenses; about these we are conversant by experience; but what the fubstance of bread and wine is, in which these qualities reside, or wherein that particular structure, virtue, or power consists which excites these perceptions in our mind; of this we know nothing at all: it is not in the least degree perceptible to us. Now, what the Roman Catholics teach concerning transubstantiation, is precisely this: 1. " That the change made is only in the material substance of the bread and wine,

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wine, which is wholly imperceptible to us; that this substance of the bread and wine is entirely taken away by the power of God, and ceases to be any longer there; and that the substance of the body and blood of Christ, which is equally imperceptible to our senses, is substituted in its place, and now exists where the bread and wine existed before: But, 2. That there is no change made in any of the sensible qualities of the bread and wine; these remain entirely the same as they were; for Jesus Christ, now present instead of the bread and wine, exhibits himself to us under the self-same appearances which the bread

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Phil. Do you know you amaze me! is this really the doctrine of the Roman Catholics? This is a plain intelligible account of the matter; but, to hear Benevolus and others on this subject, you would think it were such a heap of absurdities huddled together, that even those who held it could not give any intelligible account of what they mean by it.

and wine had before the change."

Orth. That may very well be; perhaps those gentlemen have never taken the trouble to inform themselves of what the Roman Catholics really believe concerning it; perhaps they have read what the Catholic authors write upon this subject, with the eye of prejudice and prepossession, and perhaps some of them may find it convenient to throw all the obscurity they can upon the Roman Catholic doctrine.

doctrine. Be that as it will, that what I have faid is the precife doctrine of the Roman Catholic church is manifelt from her own words in the council of Trent, where the fpeaks thus: " If any one shall deny that in the facrament of the blesfed Eucharift is contained truly, really, and fubfrantially the body and blood, along with the I foul and divinity of our Lord Jefus Chrift, and therefore whole Christ, but shall fay that he is there only in fign, figure, or power, let him be Anathema," Sell. 13. Can. 1. " If any man shall fay that in the bleffed facrament of the Eucharift, the fubstance of the bread and wine remains along with the body and blood of our Lord Jefus Christ, and shall deny that wonderful and lingular conversion of the whole substance of f the bread into the body, and of the whole fubstance of the wine into the blood, the appearances of bread and wine only remaining, which conversion the Catholic thurch most fitly calls transubstantiation, let him be Anathema," Seff. 12. Can. 2. In these two canons three things are declared; that the body and blood of Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist after confectation, where it was not before; that the substance of the bread and wine, which was there before, is no more there; and, that nothing remains of what was bread and wine but the appearances only; and hence the council concludes, that this, being a change of the fubstances only, is therefore fitly called transubstantiation, definition.

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tion, which you see is the very doctrine I laid down above almost in the same terms; for if what was there before be not there now, and what was not there before be now present, then it follows that the change of the one into the other must consist in destroying or taking away the one, and substituting the other in its place.

Phil. I cannot say it appears to me quite so plain as yet; the words of the council rather increase my difficulties; for as it says that the whole substance of the bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ, this would seem to imply that at least the elementary matter of the bread and wine passes into the body and blood of Christ, and goes to compose its substance; and therefore that the material part of the bread and wine is not destroyed nor taken away, but still remains and composes the very body and blood of Christ, somewhat in the same way that the elementary matter of the food we take is changed into the substance of our body, and goes to compose it and repair its daily waste.

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Orth. Nothing is more foreign, my dear Sir, to the sense of the council, and to the belief of the whole Roman Catholic church, than what you here advance; nay, a little attention will convince you, that it is evidently repugnant to common sense to say that the elementary matter of the bread and wine passes into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and goes to compose its substance, because the body

of Christ is already perfect and entire, incapable of increase or diminution in its substance, and has a real existence before consecration: Now, to say that two bodily fubstances numerically diffinet, existing feparately, and wholly independent of each other, should become identically the same, is evidently repugnant. You may fay, if you will, that the material substance of the bread is joined to the body of Christ, is added to it, is compenetrated with it, or the like; we do not fee any impossibility in these suppositions considered in themselves, though very different from what the Roman Catholics teach; but to fay that it becomes his identical body, the fame which existed before confecration at the right hand of the Father, is a palpable abfurdity:

When we say the food we take is changed into the substance of our body, we mean no more than that the material particles of the food, changing the form they had in the food, and acquiring a new form by the action of our organs, but unchanged in themselves, go to supply the place of other material particles of our body, which are daily confumed and fent off by the ufual fecretions; or, being added to what is there before, ferve to increase our bulk and flature; but it would be highly ridiculous to suppose that either of these, or any such change, could happen to the glorious body of Jesus Chrift. to by that the elementary matter of

Besides the Roman Catholics believe that it is the felf-same identical body of Christ, which is at the right

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right-hand of the Father in heaven, that is also prefent in the Eucharist: Now, if the material substance of the bread be supposed to remain at
all, and to enter into the composition of the
body of Christ in the Eucharist, either by incorporation, or compenetration, or whatever other
way you can imagine; it will no longer be the selfsame glorious body which is at the right-hand of
the Father, but one very different, a new compound made up of the pre-existing body of Christ,
which is already perfect and entire, and this additional matter of the bread which now enters into
its composition; which is ridiculous in itself to suppose, and directly contrary to the express belief of
the Roman Catholics.

If therefore you suppose that the material substance of the bread and wine be not entirely destroyed, and does not wholly cease to be there after confectation, you must say that it remains along with the body and blood of Christ; and this is the very thing which the council condemns and anathematizes in the canon above cited. fore plainly appears, that by the conversion of the whole fubstance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the council means nothing else but that the substance of the bread and wine is, by the almighty power of God, instantaneously taken away, and ceases any longer to be there, and that the body and blood of Christ is by the same almighty power, and in the same instant of time, placed

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placed there in its stead, the presence of this last, by virtue of the words of consecration, necessarily implying the absence of the former.

This will appear still further from the catechism of this council, composed and published by its order for the use of those who have the charge of fouls: In the Second Part upon the Eucharift, No. XXV. explaining the effects of confecration, it fays, " The Catholic faith, without all hesitation, believes and confesses that there are three most ad-' mirable and furprifing things performed by the words of confecration in this facrament; the first, ' That the true body of our Lord Jesus Christ, that very same which was born of the Virgin, and sits at the right-hand of the Father in heaven, is contained in this facrament: The fecond, That no part of the substance of the elements remains in it: The ' third, That the accidents, which are perceived by our fenses, are still there, in a wonderful and inex-' plicable manner without any subject; because (it ' immediately adds) the substance of the bread and wine is fo changed into the very body and blood of our Lord, that the substance of the bread and

wine entirely ceases to be *." A little after the second of these effects is more fully considered, and both reason and authority brought to prove, that no part of the substance of the bread and wine remains

* Cum panis et vini substantia in ipsum Domini corpus et sanguinem ita mutetur, ut panis et vini substantia omnino esse desinat. de

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impl plain mains after confectation: And No. XXXIX. it is declared that this wonderful change is performed without any manner of change in Christ, "because he is neither generated, nor changed, nor in- creases, but remains whole in his own sub- stance;" Neque enim Christus aut generatur, aut mutatur, aut augescit, sed in sua substantia totus permanet.

From these passages the explication I have given of the doctrine of the council is clear and evident; for, if Jesus Christ, the self-same who is at the right hand of the Father in heaven, be after confectation present in this sacrament, where he was not before; if he suffers no alteration in himself, is neither generated, nor changed, nor increases, but remains whole in his own substance; if no part of the substance of the bread and wine remains, but entirely ceases any longer to be; it necessarily follows, that the change of substance declared by the council can mean nothing else but that the substance of the bread and wine ceases to exist, and that the substance of the body and blood of Christ succeeds in its place.

Phil. I am now thoroughly satisfied as to the sense of the council, which you have made perfectly plain; nay, the above declaration that, in this sacrament, Christ is neither changed nor increases, but remains whole in his own substance, necessarily implies the explication you have given, for it is plainly impossible that this should be true if the ma-Vol. II. Gg terial

terial substance of the bread should be supposed in any way imaginable to be any longer there; but pray is this the way it is explained by the divines of the Catholic church?

Orth. By all of them without exception : Nay, according to their principles, it is impossible they should differ on any of the three points above mentioned, because they are taught among them, not as school opinions, but as dogmas of faith, as truths revealed by God, and declared to be fo by his church, as being effentially included in the words of the institution. You fee how the catechism of the council above-cited expressly declares, that the Catholic faith, without hesitation, believes and teaches these three most admirable things, &c. Other divines speak in the same manner; I shall add a few of the most celebrated for your further fatisfaction.

I begin with the learned Cardinal Bellarmine, whose authority is above all exception in delivering the true doctrine of his church, and his controverfial works are justly esteemed a standard on these fubjects. The third book of his treatife on the Eucharift is entirely on the real presence and tranfubftantiation: In the eleventh and following chapters he refutes the various errors that had appeared about this last point, and among the rest rejects as heretical the opinion of Durandus, who taught the very same thing you propose, that the mementary matter of the bread remained in the

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Eucharist after consecration, and became the matter of the body of Christ; which is an evident proof how widely different fuch an opinion is from the faith of the Roman Catholics. In the eighteenth chapter he explains the doctrine of the church in opposition to all these errors, and does it by showing what is meant, when we say that one thing is changed into another. To this, he fays, these three conditions are required; first, that the thing changed cease to exist; for it is unintelligible to fay that one thing is changed into another, unless that which is changed cease to be what it was before; fecondly, That fomething fucceed in the place of that which now ceases to be, otherwife it would not be a conversion, but a corruption or annihilation; thirdly, That there be a mutual connection or dependence between the destruction of the one and the succession of the other, so that the one necessarily implies the other *. Now,

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* This third condition is particularly to be observed. Every change, of whatever kind it be, whether of the thing itself or of its mode or quality, necessarily supposes the absence of one thing, mode, or quality, and the presence of another; and this is essential to the nature of every change: But there is not in every change a mutual dependence between the presence of the one and the absence of the other; so that the one necessarily follows or pre-supposes the other in one and the same action. A man truly changes his coat when he puts off one and puts on another; but he does that by two separate actions, done at different times, and quite independent on one another. In cases of this kind we cannot say there is a change of one thing into another; as we cannot say this man changes the

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as transubstantiation is a change not of the accidents or appearances of the bread and wine, which are confessed to remain unchanged, but of the whole material fubstance of the bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ; according to these conditions, by this change nothing elfe can be understood but that the substance of the bread and wine ceases to exist, and that the body and blood of Christ succeed in its place; and this, his Eminence observes, is a perfect conversion of the one subflance into the other; because the body and blood of Christ, being now present in virtue of the words of confecration, in order to verify these facred words, necessarily excludes the presence of the substance of the bread and wine; which therefore, by the almighty power of God, ceases to be where it was before, at the same inflant, and by the fame action by which the body and blood of Christ exists there. He further obferves, that this fingular conversion differs from all other changes that we know of, whether natural or supernatural, in these two points; first, Because in all other changes, it is probable that the elementary matter remains, " in utroque termino," both a it to range la out home and all in confinence it man bed some after

coat he puts off into the one be puts on. To verify this expression it is requisite that the change be made at the same instant, and by the same action, so that the presence of the one term must necessarily imply the absence of the other; as when we say, light is changed into darkness, heat into cold, or the like; wherein the very same moment that darkness and cold appear, light and heat cease; and the presence of the one necessarily implies the absence of the other.

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after and before the change †; but in transubstantiation, certum est (says he) materiam primam non manere; "it is certain that the elementary matter "does not remain;" secondly, Because in these G g 3 other

+ I find, however, feverals who are of opinion that in some, at least, of the supernatural changes related in the scriptures, such as the turning of Moles' rod into a serpent, there was a total change both of the material substance of the rod, and of its form, there being an inflantaneous destruction of the one, and production of the other; and this opinion is followed above, under the Criterion, where this example, among others such, is brought as an instance of a miracle proper to the almighty power of God alone. 'The real truth feems to be, that without a revelation it is impossible to know for certain, whether the material substance be destroyed in these supernatural conversions, or is only transformed as to its structure and composition; though the turning a dry rod into a living creature doubtless requires a great deal more than such a change of structure. If the original elementary matter be of different kinds in different creatures, then a change of one creature into another must imply a change of the elementary matter itself; if this be homogenial throughout the whole creation, then it feems fufficient, at least for all natural changes of one thing into another, that there be a change of form and structure only. Instantaneous changes of either kind evidently show the finger of God, especially when any thing inanimate is changed into a living creature, which implies a new creation of life; and hence what the magicians of Egypt did could not be a real change of their rods into férpents, as we know it was the work not of God but of the devil, to whom such a power cannot belong. It may be accounted for by fascination, or we may conceive that some of the evil spirits by their great agility removed the rods fo quickly as to be imperceptible to those present, whilst others, with equal celerity, substituted real serpents in their place ; nor can this feem any way improbable, as we fee among ourfelves many fimilar and furprifing examples done by jugglers from their great dexterity in flight of hand. But this was no more changing rods in to ferpents, than it is changing one coat into another, when we jut off one, and put another on See the preceeding note.

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other conversions, either all or some of the sensible qualities are changed, but in transubstantiation all the fenfible qualities remain as they were before, the material substance alone being changed here. This is the explication given of this mystery by this celebrated cardinal; and in the remaining chapters he repeats and inculcates the same as occasion requires, both in his proofs and in answering objections. From this it appears, that whereas, in all the natural conversions we know, of one thing into another, the change is only made in the form or fensible qualities of the object, whilst its material fubstance remains unchanged; just the reverse happens in transubstantiation; the change is made in the material substance, whilst the form or sensible qualities remain perfectly the same; and as in these other conversions the change made in the fensible qualities confifts precifely in this, that the former fenfible qualities are destroyed, and at the same instant other fensible qualities introduced in their place, the material fubliance remaining common to both; to in transubstantiation the change made in the substance confifts precisely in this, that the substance of the bread is destroyed, and at the same instant the Lody of Christ succeeds in its place, whilst the fenfible qualities remain in both the same.

I he next authority I bring is that of Tournely, a celebrated French divine of this century, who, in his theological lectures upon the Eucharist, after refuting the various errors about transubstantiation,

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explaining the sense of the church concerning it, says, The substance of the bread and wine do not cease by a mere suspension of the divine conservation, but by a positive action, to wit, consecration, by which the body of Christ becomes present, the substance of bread and wine receding.

In the judicious and pious exposition of Pope Pius's Creed, published at Paris in the year 1768, along with the epitome of the general controverfies of the two learned bishops and brothers Adrian and Peter of Wallemburg, the article of the real prefence and transubstantiation is thus declared: "We believe, according to the truth of the words of Christ, who fays, This is my lody, that in the bleffed Eucharift his body is prefent by transub-' stantiation. For as Christ, after he took bread, ' verily pronounced what he offered under the outward appearances, to be his body, and as his words could not mean the substance of the bread and wine, as is evident, nor even his own natu-' ral body, if the substance of the bread and wine ' remained under their proper accidents, it necessarily follows, that the fubflance of the bread ceases to be, and the substance of his tody alone remains under these accidents + ?"

To these celebrated authors I shall add a more recent one, Monsieur de Reval, in his philosophi-

Qua (consecratione) persecta corpus Christi fit presens, recedente panis et vini substantia. Tournely de Euchar.

[†] Necessario fieri debuit ut substantia panis desineret, et sola sub-

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cal catechism against the Deists published at Liege and Brussels in the year 1773. He begins the article on the Eucharist by this question, To deny the possibility of the real presence, is it not to deny the power of God? To which he gives this plain and simple answer, It is an absolute denial of it, for it is refusing to God the power of destroying a bit of bread, and of concealing a human body under its appearances. These few plain testimonies of such celebrated and standard authors, among innumerable others, are more than sufficient to show you what is the real sense of the Roman Catholic divines on this subject.

Phil. They are so indeed; nor can the matter in my opinion admit the smallest doubt. But, pray, is not this way of understanding the expression conversion or change of one thing into another, contrary to the common acceptation of it among mankind?

Orth. Very far from it: On the contrary, a little attention will convince you, that this is the conftant and univerfally received meaning of it. For I might defy you to show me one example, where the precise object changed is ever supposed to pass into, or compose that into which it is changed; but in every case we are always persuaded that the object changed ceases any longer to exist, and that another

[†] C'est la nier absolument, puisque c'est resuser a Dieu le pouvoir de detruire un morceau de pain, et de cacher un corps humain sous ses apparances.

nother comes into its place, but in such a manner that the presence of the one and the absence of the other always imply one another. Thus, when we fay that light is turned into darkness, does it ever enter into our head that the light remains after the change, and enters into the composition of darkness? never; all we mean is, that the light ceases to exist, and the darkness comes into its place; but in fuch a manner, that the presence of the darkness necessarily implies the absence of the light. When we fay heat is turned into cold, we never dream that the heat remains after the change, and goes to compose the cold; whoever should fay so would be laughed at as a fool: But the plain meaning is that the heat entirely ceases, and is banished by its opposite cold supervening in its stead. In like manner, when we fay a finner is changed into a Saint, do we ever imagine that his former impiety and guilt remain after his conversion, and enter into the composition of his fanctity? by no means; but we understand by that expression, that his impiety and guilt are quite taken away by the grace of God which fucceeds in their Read. Examples of this kind are without end; but to make it still more palpable, I shall consider the above expression a little more minutely when applied to compound objects. In these it commonly happens, that the precise object changed is only one part of the compound, but as the change of one part alters the condition of the whole, we therefore in common language fay that

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that the compound object itself is changed. In all the bodies around us we may consider two parts in which a change may be made, the material substance of which any body is composed, and the sensible qualities by which we distinguish it from all other bodies. In all the natural conversions of one body into another, with which we are acquainted, nothing more is required than that the change take place in the fensible qualities, whilst the material substance remains the same both before and after the change; but this is enough for us to fay that the one is changed into the other. Thus we fay that quickfilver, by one kind of chymical operation, is changed into sweet mercury; by another into red precipitate; by another into Turbith mineral, and fo on; all which exceedingly differ from one another in all their fensible qualities, and in the effects produced by them: Yet all these changes happen only in the structure and composition of the component particles of the quickfilver, whilft the material substance itself remains the same in all its various preparations, and may, by a counter-operation, be brought back to the form of quickfilver again: Yet, though the material substance remains the fame, we justly say that the compound object itself, the quickfilver, is changed into these its different preparations. In like manner, when we fay the food we take is changed into our flesh and blood, we do not mean that the material fubstance of the food is altered or changed in its own nature, but only stances of pale, all to moter

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only that the structure it had in the composition of the food, and the fensible qualities which resulted from that flructure, are, by the action of our organs, altered and changed; fo that the fame elementary matter which was in the food is now composed in the form of our flesh and blood, and exhibits the fensible qualities of flesh and blood to our view. So also we fay, that the nutritive juice of the earth is changed into all the vast variety of plants which compose the vegetable world; but the meaning of that expression is, that the same particles of matter which composed the nutritive juice being imbibed by the different plants, change the form and structure, and all the sensible qualities they had in the juice, into another form, and other qualities quite different from the former, according to the nature of the plant which imbibes them, the original matter being still the same both in the juice and in the plant. Now, if we examine attentively what it is in which all these changes of the forms or fenfible qualities confift, we shall easily perceive that it consists precisely in this, that the form and fensible qualities which the elementary matter had in the quickfilver, in the food, and in the nutritive juice, are destroyed, and cease any longer to be; and at the same time another form, and other fensible qualities are substituted in their place, whilst the material substance which receives this new form remains unchanged, the common subject both of the form destroyed and the form received. In transubstantiation no change is made in the appearances or fensible qualities of the bread and wine, these remaining perfectly the same after the change as they were before; the change takes place in the material substance alone : As, therefore, the change of these qualities in the former cases implies nothing more than the deftruction or extinction of one form, or one fet of Tenfible qualities, and the substituting of others in their place; fo in transubstantiation the change of fubstances can imply no more than the destruction or extinction of one fubstance, and the putting another in its room. And as the above and other fuch natural changes are fitly called transformations, because they are only changes of the forms or fensible qualities, the same substances remaining; fo this other is most fitly called transubstantiation, because it is only a change of the substance, whilst the forms or sensible qualities continue as they were. In district of it and w Vallage a

what you have faid, and think I have a clear and distinct idea of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation; far different indeed from what I ever had before: But permit me to ask you one question more; as they hold that the material substance of the bread is no longer there, What do they say becomes of it? In what manner does it cease to be?

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Orth. The answer to this question will show you a very important maxim, by which the Roman Catholics regulate themselves in matters of religion. Whatever articles they hold as truths revealed by God, these they adhere to with the most invariable attachment: there are no different opinions among them concerning fuch points; they are not looked upon as matter of opinion, but as absolute truths declared by the infinite veracity of God who reveals them: Hence they are taught and believed the same way by all the members of that church throughout the whole world, who being perfectly convinced of their truth, make bold and open profession of them. Of this kind are the three points above-mentioned concerning transubstantiation, viz. that Jesus Christ, God and man, who died on the crofs, and is now glorious at the right hand of the Father in heaven, is truly, really, and Substantially present in the blessed Eucharist: That no part of the material substance of the bread and wine remains there, but is wholly changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ; and that Jesus Christ presents himself to us in that holy mystery, under all the outward appearances of the bread and wine, which remain in every respect the same as they were before consecration. These, therefore, they boldly declare, profess, and believe at all times, and on all occasions. But besides points of faith or revealed truths, there are many other things that may be enquired into con-VOL. II. Hh cerning

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cerning religious matters, which have not been revealed by God. With regard to thefe, Roman Catholic divines form fuch judgments and opinions, each one as appears to him most reasonable, according to his own fense of the matter, and they are all at full liberty to adopt any opinion they please concerning such questions, provided only that the opinion they embrace does not clash with, nor contradict any revealed truth: But as for the church herfelf, she forms no opinion at all about these matters. Of this kind are the questions you have just now proposed: If you ask the Roman Catholic church what becomes of the fubitance of the bread and wine? how it is destroyed? in what manner it ceases to be? she will answer you plainly, that she knows nothing of the matter; and for this plain reason, because God Almighty has not thought proper to reveal it to her. The subject is too abstruse for human eyes to penetrate; it is absolutely impossible to know it except God should discover it; and since he has not done fo, she rests contented in her ignorance of it. Her divines indeed fav. that we may conceive the substance of the bread and wine to be taken away by an improper kind of annihilation, or rather destruction, or by dissolution, or by simple removal, or by numberless other ways eafy to an almighty power, though inconceivable to us; but all that can be faid upon this is little better than human conjectures and mere opinion,

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of which nothing can be determined for certain, because the subject-matter is beyond the sphere of our knowledge, and we have no proper data on which to found any reasonings concerning it.

Phil. Sir, this piece of intelligence gives me a particular fatisfaction, and conveys a more exalted idea of the Roman Catholic religion to the mind, than any thing I had hitherto imagined. I fee the main point with them is to preferve inviolate the facred truths which God has revealed, or, as St Jude expresses it, to contend earnestly for the faith which has been once delivered to the faints. This is a fixed point with them, in which I find they never vary; but they give themselves little concern in enquiring after the why or the how these things are so; about these it is impossible the mind of man should, by its own strength, arrive at any certain knowledge in this mortal state; and therefore enquiries of this kind make no part of their creed, but they esteem them, as they certainly are, rather as matter of curiofity than utility.

Orth. And a matter of very dangerous curiofity too, as the experience of numbers can attest: Wherefore, letting that alone, I shall now show you some obvious consequences that flow from the above explication of transubstantiation, which will still more fully clear up this matter, and at once enervate some of the principal and most specious arguments of Benevolus and others against it.

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I. It is evident from what we have feen, that transubstantiation is not impossible to Almighty God: We fee no repugnance, no contradiction in what is taught about it. It cannot be called in question, that Almighty God is able to change the material fubstance of one body into another when he pleafes, by removing or deftroying the one in an instant, and substituting the other in its place. We fee many examples in the facred scripture of sensible changes of this kind wrought instantaneously by the divine power, as of a rod turned into a. ferpent, water into blood, and water into wine; and furely, if the Creator could give being and existence to what was not, he can with equal ease change the being and existence of what is. Again, from the examples we have feen above, both in natural and supernatural things, of different objects being exhibited to our fenses under sensible qualities not their own, it is evidently not impossible, but perfectly easy for Jesus Christ, to exhibit himself to us under whatever sensible qualities he pleases; consequently it is not impossible for him to take upon him those of bread and wine; and therefore, there is no impossibility in the doctrine of transubstantiation, as believed and taught by Roman Catholics. Monsupolato anorado omol por

2. It is also manifest, that as this doctrine of transubstantiation is possible, if we suppose it true, and that Almighty God actually performs it, it may justly be enjoined by revelation as an object of di-

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vine faith. To understand this you must call to mind, that faith is the belief of any truth revealed by God, merely because God reveals it: I say merely, because if either our senses or our reason convince us of the truth of any thing revealed by God, our belief is no longer pure divine faith, but rather knowledge. St Paul tells us, that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, Rom. x. 17.; and that it is the evidence of things not feen, Heb. xi. 1. that is, the conviction and firm belief we have of things that do not appear to us from any other fource of knowledge but from divine revelation alone; and our bleffed Saviour declares, that the whole merit of faith confists in believing merely because God reveals it, though we neither fee nor understand it; Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed; bleffed are they who have not feen and yet have believed, John xx. And hence, properly speaking, supernatural truths alone, that do not fall under our fenfes, nor can be discovered by reason, are the immediate and proper objects of revelation and of faith. The change wrought in transubstantiation is entirely of this kind; it does not fall under our fenfes, the fubftances in which it is made being altogether imperceptible to us; and if we suppose it true, it is impossible either our senses or reason should ever discover it to us, nor could we ever come to the knowledge of it any, other way than by revelation from God; if there-Hh3 fore

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fore he should declare it to us, it immediately becomes a most proper object of faith, as much as any other supernatural truth revealed in the Christian religion.

3. It is no less evident, that if it be so revealed, its revelation, and confequently its reality and truth, may be proved to conviction by miracles as well as any other article of Christian faith; for it is a truth which neither falls under the examination of our fenses, nor can possibly be known by reafon; it is a fact entirely depending upon the free will of God, to do it or not to do it as he pleases; hence then it is evident, that our fenses and reafon are by no means judges of it, nor any way concerned in it: All that is necessary to convince us of its reality is to know for certain that God declares it is fo. But what greater proof can we have that God declares any truth to man, than a miracle proper to God, wrought in his name, on purpose to prove it? Therefore, such a miracle wrought in attestation of transubstantiation, must be the most convincing proof that God declares it, and consequently that it is true.

4. Hence you will clearly perceive the childish fallacy of the first argument used by Benevolus against believing transubstantiation, though attested by a miracle: His words, as you mentioned above, are these: Because there is the same evidence against that doctrine that there can be for the truth of any miracle; I mean the testimony of

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the human fenfes, and fo one cannot rationally

believe the one without dishelieving the other:

For if I believe my fenses, I cannot believe

transubstantiation; and if I disbelieve my sen-

' ses, I could not believe the truth of your mi-

' racle." Is it not evident, that Benevolus knows

nothing about the real Catholic destrine of tranfubstantiation when he argues in this manner?

Phil. I must own it is impossible to excuse him; for it is plain, from what you have faid, that the change wrought in transubstantiation is totally imperceptible to our fenfes; that they are altogether unconcerned in the belief or disbelief of it, and neither give evidence for nor against it : Whereas, the change wrought by any miracle performed in attestation of any doctrine, must be a sensible change, necessarily falling under our senses, and subjected to their examination: It is therefore most ridiculous to pretend, that there is the same evidence against transubstantiation that there is for the truth of any miracle; and I think it clear as noon-day, that the very reverse of what Benevolus afferts is most certainly true; " for I may rationally believe transubstantiation without disbelieving my fen-' fes, and may be certain from my fenfes of the reality of the miracle, without injuring them in the smallest degree by believing transubstanti-" ation."

Orth. I see you thoroughly comprehend what I have said, and the consequence you draw from it is most just; for surely no man of common sense who

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who understands the real Catholic doctrine of tranfubstantiation, would ever expose himself by making fuch a childish argument against it as Benevolus does; and the only excuse I can give for Benevohus and Dr Tillotson, from whom he takes it, is, that both the one and the other must have taken the Catholic doctrine upon truft, without giving themselves the trouble to enquire what it really is. This will further appear from the last confequence which flows from the above explication of this doctrine, with no less evidence than those already mentioned. For,

by 5. It is plain that our fenfes are by no means deceived in our belief of this mystery. This will eafily appear, if we consider, that before the change our fenses represented to us the appearances of bread and wine, because they were really there; and therefore our fenses were not then deceived: but they told us nothing of the nature of the fubstance of bread and wine which exhibited these appearances, because that was quite imperceptible to them; we indeed, arguing from the uniformity of the works of the Creator, judged from the appearances that the substance of bread and wine was there; but this was the judgment, of reafon, not the information of our fenfes. On the other hand, after confecration our fenfes represent to us the very fame appearances of bread and wine as before, and for the felf-same reason, because these appearances are still there; consequently our senses inel monamor in man be absolutely i

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are no more deceived now than in the former case; for in both cases what they represent to us is entirely conform to the truth; but as for the fubstance of the body and blood of Christ, which after confecration is presented to us under these appearances, our fenfes can tell us no more about it than they could, before confectation, tell us of the substance of the bread and wine. If we had nothing elfe to guide our reason after confecration than we had before, our judgment in both cases would be the fame, viz. that as the fame appearances of bread and wine continue, fo the fame substances of bread and wine continue also; but being convinced that God Almighty has declared, that by confecration the fubstance of the bread and wine is no longer there, but changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, as we must confess this change is possible for him, and as, in the supposition of its being true, we could never come to know it but by his revealing it, fince he actually declares it, we readily give up the judgment of reafon, which we know in this case is only a judgment of congruency, but far from being of absolute certainty, and firmly believe that what God fays is true; yet in doing this, it is evident that our fenfes are as far from being deceived now as they were before confecration; for then they told us what was really there, viz. the appearances of bread and wine, and now they tell us they perceive the fame appearances, and the fame appear-

ances are still there as before. Observe once more, if our faith told us that the facred hoft was red, and our eyes faw it white-that it was bitter, and our tafte felt it fweet, oc. then indeed our faith and fenses would be opposite to one another, and, if our faith was true, our fenses must be deceived. But as the case stands, our faith and fenfes go hand in hand in every thing in which the fenses are concerned; and therefore, though our faith be most true, yet our fenses are by no means deceived: And hence again it follows as a necessary consequence, that we may rationally believe transubstantiation without disbelieving our senses, which overthrows the foundation upon which the whole argument of Benevolus is founded.

Phil. What you fay in my opinion admits of no reply; for it is evident that the object of our faith in believing transubstantiation, and the object of our fenses when a miracle is wrought before us, are of quite different kinds; the former is an act of the omnipotence of God produced in a fubject which is altogether imperceptible to us, where no sensible effect appears, nor any change is made in the fensible qualities; the latter is a fensible effect produced by the same almighty power, but in the sensible qualities of the objects around us; the former can be known by the fense of hearing only informed by the word of God; the latter can be known by the other senses of fight and touch, is the proper object of these senses, and naturally falls ances under

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but the under their examination. It is therefore as ridiculous to deny transubstantiation, which can be known only by hearing, because my sight and touch do not inform me of it, as it would be to deny that sugar is sweet because I do not see that sweet taste with my eyes.

Orth. Your remark is very just, and is equally applicable to all fupernatural revealed truths; they are all above our reason; they fall not under the examination of our other fenfes, and can be known by the hearing only, as St Paul expressly declares: and therefore it is altogether unphilosophical to argue against them either from fense or reason: if they be revealed by God, that is fufficient, and ought to filence every objection; and if the proofs of their revelation be the same as for the other truths of Christianity, no apparent contradiction can be urged as an argument against any one of them, without sapping the foundation of all the rest; and this observation leads us to the second argument alledged by Benevolus against the belief of transubstantiation though attested by miracle, because he thinks this doctrine involves many contradictions in it. This argument is not new, any more than the former; it has been often urged against the Catholics, and as often refuted by them: but as you faid that Benevolus mentions some of these contradictions which he attributes to tranfubstantiation, I shall be glad to hear what feems the most weighty to him.

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Phil. I shall show you that in his own words *: "Our bleffed Saviour (fays he) having confecrated the holy Eucharift before his death, when his natural body was unglorified, and in the fame fate with that of other men, if transubstantion be true, the one body of Christ behaved to be endued with opposite qualities at the same time, that is, with the qualities of ordinary flesh and blood in his living body with which he spoke and acted, and with the qualities of a glorified body in the bleffed facrament, which he had just then confecrated : Or, in other words, our Saviour's. one body was mortal, periffing, and corruptible flesh and blood in his natural person, and was an 'immortal, incorruptible, impassible, and spiritual body in the holy Eucharist lying before him. Now, as mortal and immortal, corruptible and incorruptible, passible and impassible, are qualities diametrically opposite, it is as impossible they can be the properties of one and the same body at the same time, as it is impossible for a thing to be and not to be at the same time; consequently the doctrine of transubstantiation must be false."

This is his great argument, in which he feems to place a particular confidence as altogether unanferrable.

Orth. I am surprised he did not add other two of the same kind no less specious than this, to wit, that

[•] The dispute beween Eusebius and Benevolus is a real fact which happened not ten years ago.

that if this doctrine be true, the one body of Christ must be in thousands of places at one and the same time; and the whole living body of a man must be contained in the small space of a consecrated host; yea, in every visible point of it, both which seem no less impossible than the other.

Phil. I know these also are brought against this tenet, and I have seen some other letters of Benevolus, in which he condemns the affertion that a body can be in different places at once as the highest absurdity; but I suppose he thought the former so unanswerable, that he had no need of any other assistance against Eusebius. I shall however be glad to hear what can be said to all the three, which I take to be the principal heads of all that is alledged from reason against this doctrine.

Orth. They are fo; and I shall now endeavour to fatisfy you thoroughly about them. But first I must observe, that none of these apparent contradictions alledged against transubstantiation are more opposite to the light of reason than what we believe about the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation: That there should be three persons in the Godhead; that these should be really distinct. so that we can with truth affirm of the one what we cannot fay of the others; and yet that all three should be but one and the self-fame God, are myfteries that give a shock to human reason, and are directly contrary to all its lights. Again, that this divine, uncreated, felf-existent nature should be so VOL. II. intimately

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intimately united with the created, finite, and mortal nature of man; that both these opposite natures should exist in one and the same person; and that in confequence of this union God should truly fuffer and die, is so opposite to all the ideas of human reason, that it was a scandal to the Jews, and a flumbling-block to the Gentiles, and is to this day a matter of ridicule to Free-thinkers and Deifts. Now Benevolus believes these truths notwithstanding the apparent absurdities they seem to involve; nor does he think thefe abfurdities of any weight against the revelation of these mysteries in the holy scriptures; yet the doctrine of transubstantiation is much more clearly and expressly revealed in scripture than the Trinity or Incarnation: How unreasonable then is it to believe them, though less clearly revealed, notwithstanding the apparent contradictions they contain, and refuse to believe the other, though fo plainly revealed, merely because it contains some apparent contradictions?

Phil. What you say would be unanswerable, if the contradictions in each case were only apparent; but Benevolus affirms the contrary, and that therefore the case is widely different; his words are these: "The argument which I have charged home against transubstantiation is, that it in-

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evident contradictions; but with respect to the Ho-

ly Trinity, our ignorance is an effectual bar a-

gainst the possibility of proving it to be an absurdity, and therefore no parallel can be fairly

drawn between the Trinity and unity of God

' and transubstantiation." That is, as I apprehend it, the contradictions contained in transubstantiation are felf-evident and real; those in the Trinity are only apparent, owing to our ignorance of the' intermediate links of the chain by which the whole is connected.

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Orth. That is certainly his meaning; but do not you see one great objection to this too bold affertion? If a contradiction be felf-evident, and therefore real, it must certainly appear so to every man of common fense that looks on it. Was there ever a man, but one degree above an idiot, who did not fee a contradiction at first fight, in affirming, for example, that two and two make ten? And yet there have been thousands and thousands' upon the face of the earth, and are at this day men eminent for their good-fense, learning, and piety, who cannot fee the smallest contradiction in tranfubstantiation, but firmly believe it as a divine trnth: Either then we must say, that all these were absolute idiots who could not perceive the plainest and most self-evident contradiction; or we must conclude, that these pretended contradictions are neither so plain nor felf-evident as Benevolus with fuch presumptuous assurance affirms.

Phil. For my own share, I agree entirely with this last part of your conclusion; but Benevolus is fo deeply prepossessed with his own notion, that he makes no difficulty to affirm, that whoever believes transubstantiation is fitter to be sent to the physicians than to be reasoned with.

Grth. That I am not surprised at; for there are such ardent spirits to be found in the world; however, truth, when opposed by such, will suffer very little at the bottom, because their ardour generally carries them beyond the mark, which always ends in the triumph of the truth, and in their confusion. But pray, does he add nothing farther to show the disparity he appeals to?

Phil. Yes, yes, he says a great deal to explain and illustrate it. "An absurdity (says he) is an opposition between two known ideas or things:

and therefore, when we have no knowledge of the

nature of the things about which we speak, it is

" impossible to prove that there is any contradiction

between them, even though there really should

be one. To explain myself, as I have a distinct

· idea of what a human body is, and also know

what it is to be liable to death and corruption,

and what it is not to be liable to death and cor-

'ruption; I can therefore fay with certainty, that

one and the same body cannot be mortal and

immortal, corruptible and incorruptible, at the

fame time, because these are opposite modes of

existence. But as I have no idea of what the

divine nature is, nor any idea of what a divine

e person is, I cannot therefore perceive any oppo-

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fition or contradiction between the sublistence of three divine persons in one and the same divine nature. Were the nature of God the same with the nature of man, and a divine person like a human person, the doctrine of the Trinity would indeed be as abfurd, and therefore as incredible as transubstantiation; but as these natures and persons are infinitely different, therefore no argument can be formed from the one to the other, and of consequence the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, however incomprehensible to human reason, yet cannot be shown to be contradictory to it: That the nature of God should be incomprehensible to human reason, needs be no wonder: It not only may, but must be so; because a finite nature can never comprehend an infi-' nite. But though the doctrine of the Holy Trinity be thus above reason, and as such may justly be enjoined by revelation as matter of our belief; because nothing is more reasonable than to believe upon the testimony of God what is above our reason; yet transubstantiation, which is not, properly speaking, above, but plainly contrary to reason, cannot be revealed by God, and therefore ought not to be believed." This is the whole of his reasoning at large, as delivered by himself in his letters to Eusebius.

orth. In this long citation from Benevolus, and in the former one to which this is a fequel, there are feveral expressions which, I fear, would not

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fland the examination of found theology; but this I shall pass over as not strictly connected with our prefent subject, and shall willingly give him all the praise he deferves for several folid truths and just principles which he has here laid down or fuppofed, and in which I most heartily agree with him. They are as follows: 1. That an abfurdity is an opposition between two known ideas or things. 2. That when we have no knowledge of the nature of the things about which we fpeak, it is impossible to prove there is any contradiction between them. 3. That we may be certain of the truth of any proposition, tho we have no knowledge of the nature of the things or terms which compose it, as is the case with the Holy Trinity. 4. That a proposition is then said to be above reason when it is true in itself, but we do not see the connection between its terms, by reafon of our ignorance of their natures and proper-5. That a proposition is then against reafon, or contrary to reason, when we have a clear and distinct idea of the nature and properties of its terms, and plainly fee the opposition or repugnance-Upon these folid grounds Benebetween them. volus justly defends the mystery of the blessed Trinity from all imputation of absurdity or contradiction, which can never be proved to be in that mystery, for this plain reason, because we have no idea of what the divine nature is, or of what a drine person is; nor indeed can we possibly have

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a clear and comprehensive idea of these objects or their properties in our present state. Upon the same grounds he pretends to prove, that transfubstantiation involves contradictions in its very bosom, and is therefore absurd and false; which, according to the above principles in which we both agree, necessarily supposes, that we have a clear and distinct knowledge of the nature and properties of its objects. The whole of what he says then depends upon the truth of this supposition, and I am very willing to rest the issue of the cause upon it.

Phil. This is very fair indeed; but pray have we not a clear and distinct knowledge of a human body? and was not the humanity of Jesus Christ like unto us in all things, sin only excepted?

Orth. Our knowledge of the nature of the huz man body, my dear Sir, is exceedingly imperfect. as indeed it is of the nature of all the bodies around us; our knowledge of the nature of the humanity of Jesus Christ is vastly more so, and still more are we ignorant of the objects of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Call to mind the explication given above from the council of Trent of that my [2. tery, to wit, that " the substance of the bread and " wine are changed into the substance of the body "and blood of Jesus Christ, the outward appear-" ances of bread and wine remaining unchanged." Now, has Benevolus a clear and diffinct knowledge of the substance of bread and wine? does he feeclearly what is possible or impossible to be done with:

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with it by the almighty power of the Creator? has he a clear and distinct knowledge of the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ? does he know every thing of which it is capable or incapable? does he comprehend fully the nature and properties of the humanity of Jesus Christ? of that facred humanity which is hypoftatically united with the divine nature in one perfon? does he clearly understand all that was possible or impossible for this human nature fo united with the divinity to do, even in its mortal state? does he fee all that it is capable or incapable of doing, now that it is glorified at the right-hand of the Father? And yet all this behove to be known, and to be known as clearly as we know what two is, and what ten is, before we could prudently pronounce truly that transubstantiation involves in its bosom the plainest and most self-evident contradiction. It is evident then that the objects of transubstantiation are far above the reach of our understanding, being the interior fubstance of bread and wine, which is wholly imperceptible to us, and the glorified body of Jesus Christ, intimately and incomprehensibly united in one person with the divinity; these we certainly can never comprehend, nor in any degree underfland in our present mortal state; consequently, according to Benevolus's own principles, it is impossible to prove a contradiction in what is affirmed about them; therefore transubstantiation may be true for any thing we know, and if true (to use Benevolus's dion

volus's own words), though incomprehensible to human reason, yet cannot be shown to be contrary to it; it is above reason, and as such may justly be enjoined by revelation as a matter of our belief, because nothing is more reasonable than to believe upon the testimony of God what is above our reason. And thus you fee, that upon the very principles adopted by Benevolus, the mystery of the Trinity and of tranfubstantiation, and indeed all fupernatural truths proposed to our belief by revelation, must stand or fall together; their objects are all hid from our eyes; we have but a very imperfect knowledge, if any at all, of their natures and properties; what revelation proposes to us concerning them we could never have had any idea of, had it not been revealed to us; and therefore objections raised against any of them from reason or the senses, either must affect all revealed truths or none at all, for they are all upon the fame bottom, and must stand or fall together. a group of and all all any and a

Phil. From this clear and strong reasoning I plainly perceive where Benevolus's mistake lies, and the only excuse I can alledge for him is, what you mentioned above, that he certainly has never understood the real Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, otherwise he never would have exposed himself as he does, by arguing so violently against it, upon a supposition that he has a distinct idea of the objects of that doctrine, which he certainly has not, and without which the whole train

of his argumentation concludes unanswerably against himself; But what I cannot account for in him is this, that though his whole reasoning manifestly fuppofes that he has a thorough knowledge of all the properties of a glorified body; nay, though all he fays must of necessity fall to the ground without that knowledge, yet, in one of his letters to Eufebius, he fairly owns he knows nothing about the matter at all; his words are these: "You ask me " whether the same body cannot, by the power " of God, be in different places at the same time? " to which I answer, that if you mean a glorified " body, I cannot tell, because I know no more of the or properties of a glorified body than I do of a spi-" rit." Now, after this plain confession of his ignorance, wherein he certainly speaks the truth, with what face can he run out with fuch virulence and heat against transubstantiation, as involving contradictions in its bosom; though by his own principles it is impossible for him to prove any contradiction in it, without having a thorough knowledge of all the properties of a glorified body? Is this acting the divine, the philosopher, or even the man?

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Orth. This, my dear Sir, needs not surprise you; it is only an instance, among many others, of those self-contradictions which every one must necessarily fall into who is engaged in defence of error. Truth is always consistent with itself, and its beauty is never displayed in stronger colours, than by the

the inconsistencies and self-contradictions of those too self-sufficient adversaries who set themselves virulently to oppose it.

Phil. Your observation is very just. But now, suppose the above pretended contradictions were urged against you by themselves, I would be glad to know what answer you would give to each of them.

Orth. In the first place, I am not obliged to give any answer to them at all till you first prove their reality, which your ignorance of the things themselves makes it impossible for you ever to do; just as Benevolus would answer to the apparent contradictions pretended to be found in the mystery of the trinity or incarnation.—In the fecond place, I would observe, that these apparent contradictions alledged against transubstantiation, have even less weight against it than those of the Trinity have against that mystery; for the contradictions which Deifts alledge against the Trinity appear in that very mystery itself, in the very terms in which it is proposed; whereas it is not so much as pretended that the real doctrine of transubstantiation, as above explained, contains in itself even a shadow of contradiction or of impossibility; and I might defy Benevolus himfelf, for as good will as he feems to have to it, to point out any one fuch in it: All the contradictions, abfurdities, or impossibilities supposed to be found in transubstantiation, are only pretended to be found in its confequences: If it be true, fay they, then it will follow that the same body of Jesus Christ must be in many different places at one and the same time: That the same one body of Christ may have opposite qualities at the fame time: That the whole body of a man must be contained in the small space of an hoft, and so on: All which you fee are only alledged as confequences of the doctrine, whilst the doctrine itself stands free of all shadow of contradiction; whereas the contradictions alledged against the Holy Trinity attack the very mystery itself, as it is apparently impossible, say they who deny it, that three persons really distinct among themselves, and of each of whom we can affirm what we cannot fay of the others, should yet be but one and the felf-fame individual divine being. If therefore our ignorance of the nature of the objects in the bleffed Trinity, enervates the weight of these apparent contradictions, and fully frees us from even attempting to explain them, though they fall, if I may fay fo, upon the very vitals of the mystery itself, how much more must our ignorance of the nature of the objects in the mystery of transubstantiation totally destroy all the apparent weight of any contradiction alledged against it, and free us from all obligation of explaining them, or endeavouring to reconcile them, confidering that they attack not the mystery itself. but only fall upon the consequences supposed to flow from it?-But in the third place, from what

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I have faid above, you will find it no difficult matter to give an answer even to each of those supposed contradictions themselves.

Phil. I will be glad to fee what could be faid to each of them.

Orth. I shall now show you that, and begin with examining whether it be possible for one and the same body to be in different places at the same time. This, though readily acknowledged by feveral learned Protestants, is held out by Benevolus and others as an absolute impossibility; but I am afraid it would not be easy for them to show any clear contradiction in it, by reason of the very limited and imperfect knowledge we have both of body and place. The miracle of feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, with five barley-loaves and two small fishes, affords so firong an argument to prove that the power of God can make even natural bodies exist in different places at the fame time, that I might defy Benevolus to give any fatisfactory answer to it : but I shall lay no stress upon that; the question is not about any natural body, but about the body of Jesus Christ; that body which even before his death, while in a mortal state as well as now, was intimately united with the divinity, was capable even then of putting on the qualities of a glorified body, as was done at the transfiguration, and is now totally and unchangeably in a glorified state at the right hand of his Father. Now, if transub-Kk Vol. II.

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transubstantiation be true, it will evidently follow. not that a natural body may be in different places at once, but that this glorious body of Jefus Christ may be, nay must be in numberless different places at one and the fame time; but who shall dare to affirm this to be impossible? Does Benevolus, or any mortal man, comprehend the qualities and perfections of a glorified body, and of a glorified body which is incomprehenfibly united to the divine nature in one person? Shall finite man dare to pronounce what is possible or impossible for the glorified body of a God, made man, to do? Shall the creature take upon him to define what the body of his Creator is capable or incapable of doing! We must therefore acknowledge here, as Benevolus does with regard to the Holy Trinity, that our ignorance of the nature and qualities of a glorified body, especially of a glorified body united in one person with the divinity, is an effectual bar against the possibility of proving its existence in different places at the same time to be an absurdity, and therefore no parallel can be fairly drawn between it and natural bodies, even though it should be granted that these last cannot be fo replicated.

This being the case, the second pretended contradiction that is alledged to slow from transubstantiation, viz. that the same one body of Jesus Christ would have opposite qualities at the same time, falls to the ground all at once. For if the body of Jesus

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Christ can be in different places at one and the fame time, what contradiction can there be in his exhibiting himself to us in one place with one kind of qualities, and with others in another? Obferve these qualities are extrinsical to the essence of the body; they do not affect nor alter its nature: It was the felf-fame Holy Ghoft that appeared at Jordan under the form of a dove, and to the apostles under the form of fiery tongues; and fure no man can doubt that he could have taken both these appearances at the same time, had he been pleafed to do fo: In the fame manner, it is the felf-fame Jesus Christ that fat at table in a human form with his apostles, and was at the fame time in the bleffed facrament under the form of bread: the outward appearances under which he exhibited himself to his apostles in two different places at once, made no difference in his nature. He was perfectly the same in both places. Hence you may fee, that the force of this argument in which Benevolus fo much exults, disappears at once; and that the fallacy couched under it rifes from its supposing that the opposite qualities he fpeaks of alter the nature of our Saviour's body; and that they would be in it not only at the same time, but also in the same place, both which suppositions you see are false.

As for the other pretended impossibility, that the whole body of a man should be contained under the small space of an host, and in every visi-

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ble particle of it, it vanishes all at once upon the same principles: Our Saviour himself assures us. that at the refurrection even our bodies shall become like the angels of God, putting on the properties and qualities of spirits: Now, one quality of spirits is, not to be confined to any magnitude in themselves, and much less in the appearances they take in our eyes: the angels that appeared of old to the fervants of God were still the fame, whether they took upon them the appearance of a large man or of a little one; and shall it be called in question that Jesus Christ, God and man, can appear to us under any form or magnitude he pleases? Our ignorance of what is possible or impossible for his glorious body, puts an effectual bar to the possibility of proving any absurdity or imposfibility in his doing fo.

Phil. What you say, in my opinion, can admit of no reply; and to me you have made it evident, that it is impossible to prove any absurdity or contradiction in transubstantiation, for the felf-same reason, and upon the self-same grounds, that it is impossible to prove any such in the mystery of the Trinity, or indeed in any of the facred mysteries of the Christian religion, our impersect knowledge, or rather our ignorance of the objects of these mysteries, makes it impossible for us to judge by our reason of what is possible or impossible in them, and upon that account they are all above our reason: What we know

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of them we could never have thought of, had not God revealed it to us; and his revelation, as it is the only possible way by which we could ever have known them, so it gives us the most undoubted certainty of what he announces about them; we therefore on that ground most rationally believe them, though we neither see nor understand them.

Orth. Your observation is most just; and the natural consequence of all we have seen is, that as there cannot be a more convincing proof that God reveals any doctrine, than a miracle proper to God wrought in attestation of it, the doctrine of transubstantiation is as capable of being proved to be a revealed truth by such a miracle wrought for that end, as any other mystery of the Christian religion whatsoever; and therefore that the incredulity of Benevolus is without excuse, and his famous proposition is not only blasphemous in itself, as we have seen above, but all he says in defence of it totally destitute of reason, and only can arise from an unpardonable ignorance of the real doctrine he pretends to condemn.

Phil. Sir, I am much obliged to you for all this trouble you have taken, and shall endeavour to improve by your instructions.

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nt w of Orth. You are exceedingly welcome, my dear Sir. Adieu.

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